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Wild Spain ...

Abel Chapman, Walter John Buck

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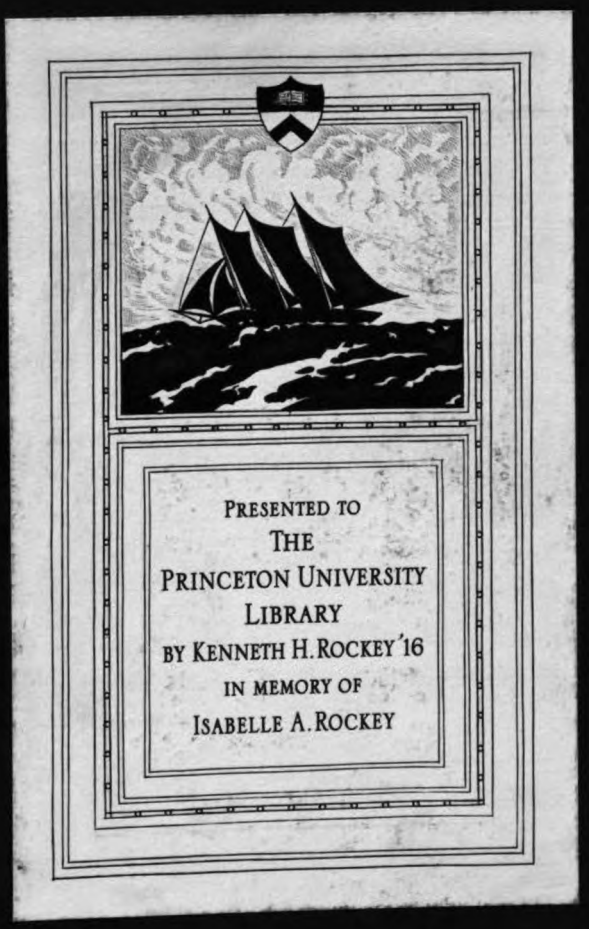

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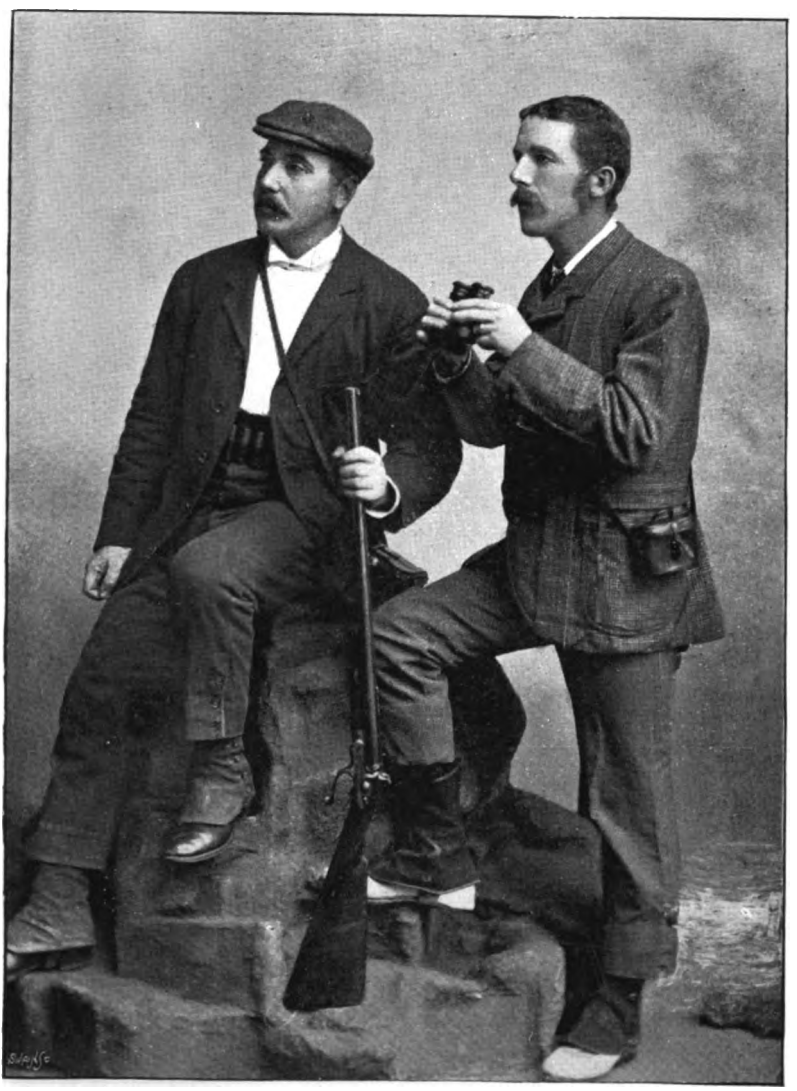

"TWO IBEX-HUNTERS."

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Plate 1.

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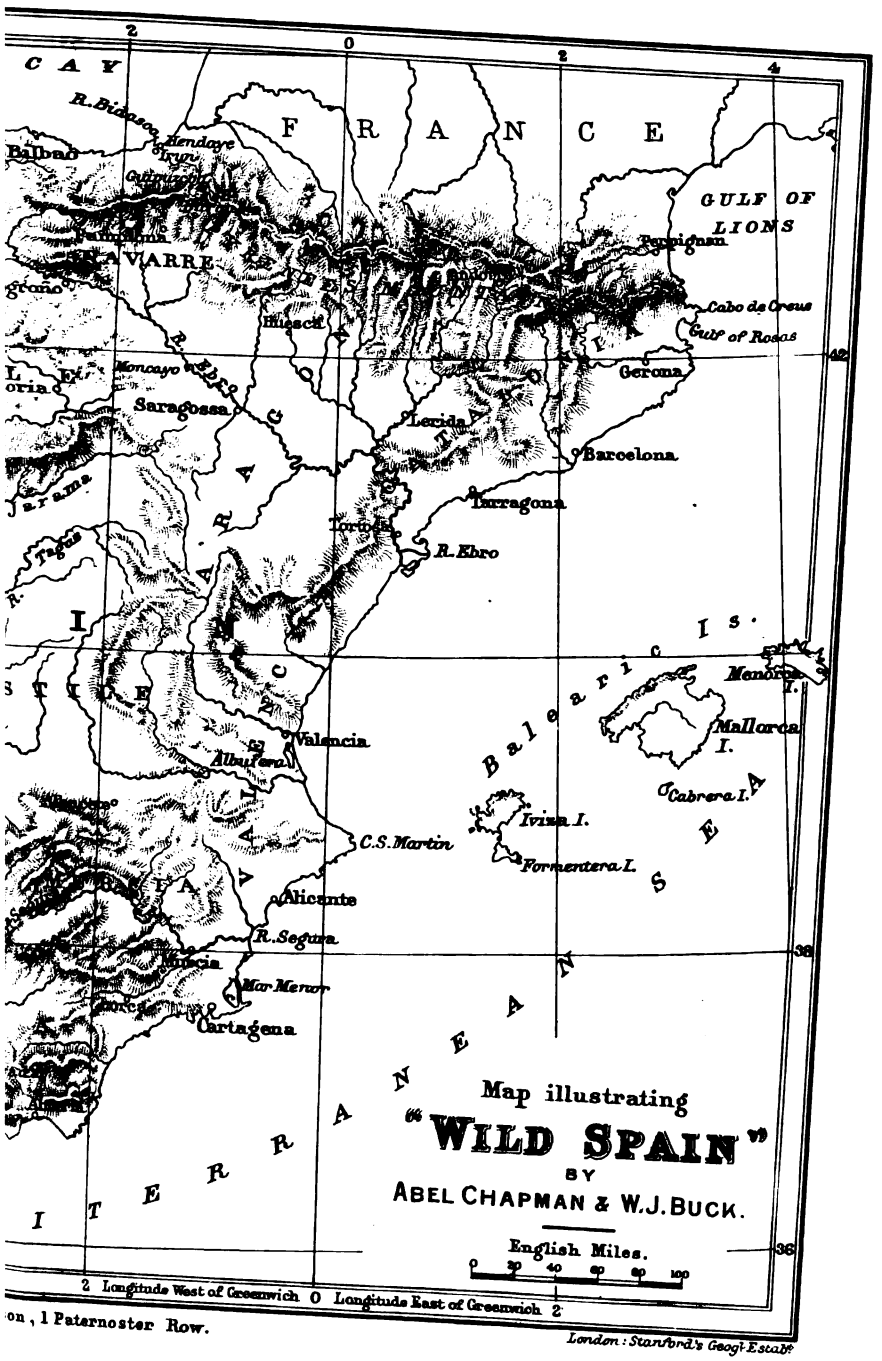

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WILD SPAIN

(ESPAÑA AGRESTE)

RECORDS OF

SPORT WITH RIFLE, ROD, AND GUN,

NATURAL HISTORY AND EXPLORATION

BY

ABEL CHAPMAN, F.Z.S.

AUTHOR OF "BIRD-LIFE OF THE BORDERS"

AND

WALTER J. BUCK, C.M.Z.S., OF JEREZ

WITH 174 ILLUSTRATIONS, MOSTLY BY THE AUTHORS

LONDON

GURNEY AND JACKSON, 1, PATERNOSTER ROW

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PREFACE.

In "Wild Spain" we endeavour to describe a little-known land from a point of view hitherto almost unoccupied—that of the sportsman-naturalist. Many books have been written on Spain—some very good ones: but recent volumes chiefly confine themselves to the history, antiquities, architecture, &c., of the country, with their authors' impressions of the Spanish people. Such subjects find no place—save incidentally—in the present work, which systematically avoids the beaten track and essays to depict some of the unknown and more remote regions.

During more than twenty years the authors have undertaken sporting expeditions into various parts of Spain—chiefly in Andalucia, but including, at one time or another, nearly all the western provinces from the Mediterranean to Biscay. A love of wild sport has been, perhaps, the leading motive; but the study of natural history has hardly been of secondary importance. In pursuit of these twin objects we have spared neither time nor trouble, spending weeks—sometimes months—at a time, in the sierras and wildernesses of Spain, bivouacing wherever night overtook us, or the chances of sport might dictate, and camping-out on the glorious snow-clad cordilleras.

Our subjects are the wild-life and *ferœ naturæ* of the

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Peninsula—including in the latter expression, by a slight stretch of the term, the brigand and the gypsy, with remarks on agriculture as cognate and supplementary. As far as convenient, the sequence of chapters follows the change of the seasons, commencing with spring-time. Hence the earlier part of the book is more concerned with natural history—though the pursuit of ibex and bustard may be followed in spring; while the latter half is more exclusively devoted to sport.

Long residence in Spain has afforded opportunities which are not available to the casual traveller. Especially is this the case with sport, of which we have, at times, enjoyed some of the best that Spain affords. But it should be remarked that many of the shooting campaigns herein described have been on private and preserved grounds; and, while we naturally select the more fortunate records, we pass over in silence many a blank day and fruitless effort. Nearly all ground on which *large* game is found, is preserved, with the exception of remote parts of the sierras, where wild pig and roe may be shot, and those higher mountain-ranges which form the home of ibex and chamois; moreover, while indicating in general terms the distribution of the various game- and other animals, we have in many instances avoided naming precise localities.

In describing a foreign land, it is impossible entirely to avoid the use of foreign terms for which, in many cases, no precise equivalents exist in English: but, to minimize this drawback, we append a glossary of all Spanish words used herein. Conversely, lest Spanish readers should misinterpret the title of this book, we have added a translation in the terms ESPAÑA AGRESTE.

The illustrations consist of reproductions, either from

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photographs or from rough sketches in pen-and-ink and water-colours by the authors, whose only merit lies in their essaying to represent in their native haunts some of the least-known birds and beasts of Europe, several of which, it is probable, have never before been drawn from the life. If some of these sketches are not as satisfactory as we could have wished, the difficulties under which they were produced may serve as some excuse. At the last moment we have had some of them "translated" in London by Messrs. C. M. Sheldon and A. T. Elwes, and are also indebted to Miss M. E. Crawhall for several sepia-drawings made by her in Spain.

It had been our intention to append a list of the birds of Spain, with their Spanish names and short notes on each species; but this we find would exceed our limits, and moreover the blanks and "missing links" still remain so numerous that we have abandoned—or at least deferred—that part of our programme. This may explain a certain want of continuity or coherence, in an ornithological sense.

We are indebted to Lord Lilford and to Messrs. J. C. Forster and Ralph W. Bankes for several valuable notes and assistance, also to Admiral Sir M. Culme-Seymour for photographs taken in "Wild Spain"; while we cannot sufficiently express our gratitude to Mr. Howard Saunders, who has in the kindest manner gone through the proof-sheets, and whose long experience and intimate knowledge of Spain have been most generously placed within our reach. For any serious mistakes which may remain, the authors must be solely responsible.

December 31*st*, 1892.

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WILD SPAIN.

(ESPAÑA AGRESTE.)

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD-WORLD CORNER OF EUROPE.

ANDALUCIA AND HER MOUNTAIN-BARRIERS.

AMONG European countries Spain stands unique in regard to the range of her natural and physical features. In no other land can there be found, within a similar area, such extremes of scene and climate as characterize the 400 by 400 miles of the Iberian Peninsula. Switzerland has alpine regions loftier and more imposing, Russia vaster steppes, and Norway more arctic scenery: but nowhere else in Europe do arctic and tropic so nearly meet as in Spain. Contrast, for example, the stern grandeur of the Sierra Nevada, wrapped in eternal snow, with the almost tropical luxuriance of the Mediterranean shores which lie at its feet.

Nor is any European country so largely abandoned to nature: nature in wildest primeval garb, untouched by man, untamed and glorious in pristine savagery. The immense extent of rugged sierras which intersect the Peninsula partly explains this; but a certain sense of insecurity and a hatred of rural life inherent in the Spanish breast are still more potent factors. The Spanish people, rich and poor, congregate in town or village, and vast stretches of the "campo," as they call it, are thus left uninhabited, *despoblados* — relinquished to natural con-

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ditions, to the wild beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Perhaps in this respect the semi-savage regions of the far East, the provinces of the Balkans and of classic Olympus, most nearly approach, though they cannot rival, the splendid abandonment of rural Spain. And as a nation, the Spanish people vary *inter se* in almost the same degree. It is, in fact, that characteristic of Iberia which is reflected in the picturesque diversity of the Iberians.

One cause which tends to explain these divergences, racial and physical, is the exceptionally high mean elevation of the Peninsula above sea-level. Spain is a highland plateau; a huge table-mountain, intersected by ranges of still loftier mountains, but devoid of low-land over a large proportion of its area, save in certain river-valleys and in the comparatively narrow strips of land, or alluvial belts, that adjoin the sea-board—chiefly in its southernmost province, Andalucia.

Few nations live at so great an average elevation. The cities of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, all the Scandinavian capitals, and even Lisbon, stand at, or a little above, sea-level; Vienna, Moscow, and Dresden have elevations of only a few hundred feet; but Madrid is perched at 2,384 feet, with the snow-fields of Guadarrama overlooking the Puerta del Sol, while a large area of Central Spain, comprising the Castiles, Aragon and Navarre, is of even greater altitude. Thus Burgos stands at 2,873 feet; Segovia, 2,299; Granada, 2,681; and the Escorial at 3,686 feet.

These central table-lands, exposed to a tropical sun, become torrid, tawny deserts in summer; in winter—owing rather to rarefied air than to very low temperatures—they are subject to a severity of cold unknown in our more temperate clime, and to biting blasts from the Alpujarras, the Guadarrama, and other mountain ranges which intersect the uplands, and on which snow lies throughout the year, contrasting strangely in the dog-days with the pitiless heat of summer and the intensity of the azure background.

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Of different type is the mountain region of the north —the Cantabrian Highlands bordering on Biscay, the Basque Provinces, Galicia and the Asturias, offshoots of the Pyrenean system. There the country is almost Scandinavian in type, with deeply rifted valleys, rapid salmon-rivers, and rushing mountain-torrents abounding in trout; and an alpine fauna including the chamois and bear, ptarmigan, hazel-grouse, and capercaillie. That is a land of rock, snow, and mist-wreath, of birch and pine-forest: abrupt and untilled, wind-swept and wet as a West Highland moor, the very antithesis of the

AN ANDALUZ.

smiling province which most concerns us now—Andalucia. This, more African than Africa, in spring, autumn and winter is a paradise, the *huerta* of Europe, low-lying and protected by the sierras of Nevada and Morena from the deadly breath of the central plateau; but in the four summer months an *infierno*, where every green thing is burnt up by a fiery sun, where shade is not, and where life is only endurable by discarding European habits and adopting those of Moorish or Oriental races.

Naturally such contrasts of climate and country re-act upon the character of the denizens—be they human or *ferœ naturæ*—of a land which includes within its boundaries nearly all the physical conditions of Europe and

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Northern Africa. But it is the peculiar mental cast and temperament of the Spanish race, as much as the physical causes alluded to, that have developed those clean-cut differences that to-day distinguish the various Iberian provinces. It is the self-sufficiency, the "provincialism," and careless unthinking disposition of the individual, as much as mountain-barriers, that have separated adjacent provinces as effectually as broad oceans.

Though springing from a common root, *i.e.*, the blend of Roman and Phœnician blood with the aboriginal tribes of Iberia, the vicissitudes of twelve centuries of history, with

A GRANADINO.

its successive foreign invasions and occupations, have materially modified the racial characteristics of the Spanish people. The Latin element still predominates, both in type and tongue: but Semitic, Aryan, and even Turanian strains are all present. The Spanish nation of to-day is composed rather of a congeries of heterogeneous peoples and provinces, once separate kingdoms, and still incapable of coherence or of fusion into a concrete whole, than of sections of a single race. Compare the sturdy and industrious, albeit somewhat phlegmatic, Galician, the happy despised bondsman, the hewer of wood and drawer of

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water of the Peninsula, with the gay and careless Andaluz who spurns and derides him: or the fiery temperament of aristocratic Castile and Navarre with the commercial instincts of Catalonia and the north-east. Probably the most perfect example of natural nobility is afforded by the peasant proprietor of pastoral Leon; then there is a pelt-clad, root-grubbing *homo sylvestris* peculiar to Estremenian wilds, who awaits attention of ethnologists. There are the Basques of Biscay—Tartar-sprung or Turanian, Finnic or surviving aborigines, let philologists decide; at any rate, a race by themselves, distinct in dress and habit, in

BASQUE PEASANT.

laws and language, from all the rest. Reserved, but courteous and reliable, the Basques are dangerously ready for their much-prized *fueros* to plunge their country in civil war.* The differences which to-day distinguish these allied races are as deep and defined as those which stand

* The *fueros* of the Basques comprise certain franchises and privileges granted or upheld by ancient charters, and are their undoubted right, though sought to be ignored by Madrid statesmen. It was largely through his promises to re-establish their *fueros*, that Don Carlos enlisted the sympathy and support of the Basque provinces. The subject, however, is an intricate one, and is only alluded to incidentally.

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between themselves and the foreigner of alien blood. But we are rambling, and must remember that in this chapter we only propose to deal with

Andalucia.

Often and well as in bygone days this sunny province has been described, yet the modern life and nineteenth-century conditions of rural Andalucia are now comparatively unknown—have fallen into oblivion amid the more ambitious and eventful careers of other countries. And, indeed, there is needed the genius of a Cervantes or a Ford adequately to depict or portray the quaint and picturesque *ensemble* of this old-world corner of Europe, so distinct from all the rest, and unchanged since the days of Don Quixote. Spain, the land of anomaly and paradox, is a complex theme not lightly to be understood or described by aliens, albeit possessed of that first qualification, the passport to every Spanish heart—a sympathetic nature. Around the country and its people, around everything Spanish, there hangs, in our eyes, a grace and an infinite charm; but it is a subtle charm, hardly to be described or defined in words of ours.

The very inertia, the mediæval conditions thinly veneered, which characterize modern Andalucia in an era of insensate haste and self-assertion, prove to some a solace and a fascination. There are not wanting minds which, amidst different environments, can enjoy and admire such primitive simplicity—stagnation, if you will—and find therein a grateful and refreshing change. In Southern Spain life is dreamed away in sunshine and in an atmosphere forgetful of the present, but redolent of the past. The modern Andaluz is content *de s'écouter vivre*, while the ancient chivalry of his race and his land's romantic history is evidenced by crumbling castle on each towering height; by the palace-fortresses and magnificent ecclesiastical fabrics of the middle ages: while the abandoned aqueducts, disused highways and broken bridges of the Roman period, attest a bygone energy.

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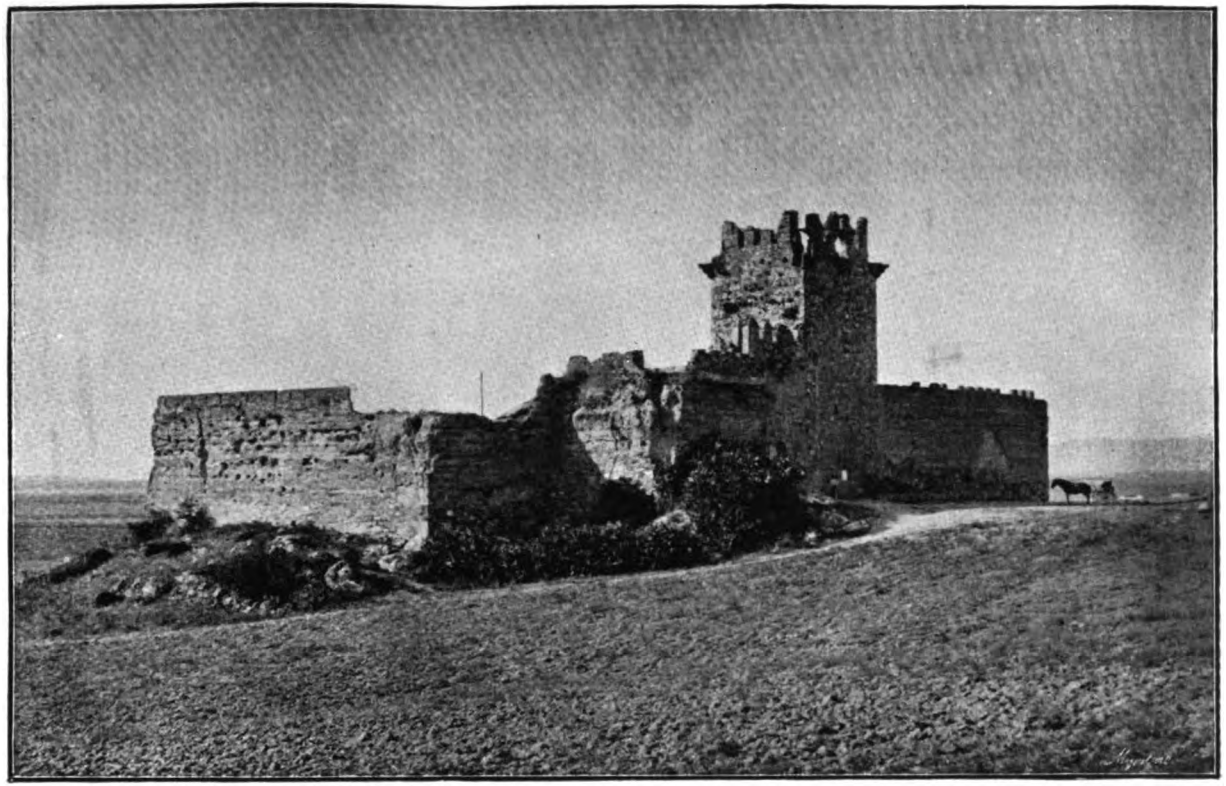

Plate II. RELICS OF THE MOORS—RUINS OF THE WATCH-TOWER OF MÉLGAREJO. Page 6.

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Andalucia is a land of vine-clad slopes and *olivares;* of boundless prairies and corn lands where rude old-world tillage leaves undisturbed the giant of European game-birds, the Great Bustard, pushed back by modern cultivation from northern fields; a land of vast trackless heaths aromatic of myrtle and mimosa, lentisk and palmetto, alternating with park-like self-sown woods of cork-oak and chestnut, ilex and wild olive, carpeted between in spring-time with wondrous wealth of flowers—lonely scenes, rarely traversed save by the muleteer. For Spain is a land where the mule and donkey still represent the chief means of transport—not yet, nor for many a year, to be displaced by steam and rail. Through every mountain-pass, along every glen of her sierras, across each scrub-clad plain and torrid *dehesa*, still file long teams of laden pack animals urged townwards by sullen muleteer: or, when returning to his *pueblo* among the hills, himself and beasts in happier mood, and sitting sideways on the hind-most, he sings his songs of love and wrong, no tune or words of modern ring, but those in which the history of his race is told; now sinking to a dirge-like cadence, anon in high-pitched protests of defiance—songs that ever have been sung since the Arab held his sway over a proud but conquered people. Truly the *arriero* is a type of rural Spain: his monotonous chant, and the gaudy trappings of his mule-team appearing and disappearing with every winding of the mountain-track, bespeak the spirit of the sierra. In all these and in a host of cognate scenes and sounds, in the grandeur of untamed nature, and in the freedom and inborn grace of a rarely favoured people, there springs a perennial charm to the traveller, a restful refreshing draught of *laissez faire*, and a glimpse into a long-past epoch that can hardly be enjoyed elsewhere in Europe. Here of old fierce fights were fought for this rich prize in soil and climate; its fabled fertility attracting hither in turn the legions of Rome, the Goths, and, last, the Moorish hordes, to conquer and to hold for seven hundred years.

The Province of Andalucia with its corn-plains and vine-

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yards, orange and olive-groves, barren wastes and lonely *marismas*, covers a stretch of three hundred miles from east to west, and half that extent in depth; and is bounded —save on the Atlantic front—by an unbroken circle of sierras. Commencing at Tarifa on the south, the mountain-barrier is carried past Gibraltar and Malaga to the Sierra Nevada, whose snow-clad summits reach 12,000 feet; and beyond, on the east, by the Almerian spurs. Nestling in the lap of this long southern range lies the narrow belt of "Africa in Europe," above alluded to,

FAIR SEVILLAÑAS.

where, secured from northern winds and facing the blue Mediterranean, grow even cotton and the sugar-cane; while the date-palm, *algarrobo* or carob-tree, the banana, quince, citron, lemon, and pomegranate, with other sub-tropical plants, flourish in this Spanish Riviera. Then, from the easternmost point of the province, the Sagres Mountains continue the rock-barrier to the point where the Sierra Morena separates the sunny life of Andalucia from the barrenness of La Mancha and primitive Estremadura. These grim and almost unbroken solitudes of the Sierra

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Morena form the entire northern boundary, continued by the Sierra de Aroche to the frontier of Portugal, and thence, by a lesser chain, to the Atlantic once more. The short coast-line between Trafalgár and Huelva thus forms, as it were, the only opening to this favoured land, secure in a mountain-setting—the gem for which contending races fought for centuries, and from whose southernmost rock the British flag floats over the bristling battlements of Gibraltar.

To see Andalucia, the traveller must ride. In a wide and wild land, where distances are great and the heat greater, where roads, rail, and bridges exist not, the saddle is the only means of locomotion. In Spain nothing can be done on foot: in a land of *caballeros* even the poorest bestrides his *borrico*. The traveller becomes an integral part of his beast, and his resting-place, the village *posada*, is half-inn, half-stable, where he must provide for the needs of his four-footed friend before he thinks of his own. A ride through the wilder regions, and especially among the sierras, involves, however, an amount of forethought and provision that, to those unacquainted with the *cosas de España*, would be well nigh incredible. In the open country no one lives, and nothing can be obtained, or, at least, it is unsafe to rely on it for anything. Thus one is obliged to carry from the town all the necessaries of life—an elastic, indefinite expression, it is true. What serves amply for one man may imply discomfort and misery to another: still, there remains for all an irreducible minimum, and only those who have tested their requirements in the field know how numerous and bulky remains this absolutely indispensable "balance." First there is provend for the beasts; heavy sacks of grain, straw, &c., necessitating mules to carry them, and this, in turn, nearly doubling the quantity. Thus an expedition of a fortnight or so signifies nothing less than the transport of huge mule-loads of impedimenta, the most bulky of which are for the use of the beasts themselves: though the indispensables for their riders are considerable—bread, meat, eggs and oranges, skins of wine, and, in most cases, tents with all the paraphernalia of camp-outfit, cooking apparatus, and the rest.

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Burdened with all this cargo, and in a rough country where each traveller makes his own road—since no others exist—progress is slow: through jungle, broken ground or wood, the wayfarer steers by compass, landmark, or instinct—sometimes by the lack of the latter, as he finds too late. Deep bits of bog and frequent lagoons must be circumvented, and rivers forded where no "fords" exist: an operation which, owing to the deep mud and treacherous ground bordering the sluggish southern rivers, often involves off-loading, carrying across in detail, and restowing on the other bank—a troublesome business, especially after dark.

In this land of surprises, the *pays de l'imprévu*, it is the unexpected that always occurs. Seldom does a ride through the wilder regions of Spain pass without incident. Thus once we were carried off as prisoners by the Civil Guard—not having with us our *cédulas de vecindad*—and taken forty miles for the purpose of identification: or the way may be intercepted by that fraternity whose ideas of *meum* and *tuum* are somewhat mixed; or, worse still, as twice happened to us, by a fighting bull. One *toro bravo*, having escaped in a frenzy of rage from a herd whose pasturage had been moved fifty miles up the country, was occupying a narrow cactus-hedged lane near his old haunts, and completely barred the way, attacking right and left all who appeared on the scene. Warning of the danger ahead was given us at a wayside shanty where the *ventero* and his wife had sought refuge on the roof. Nothing remained but to clear the way and rid the district of a dangerous brute already maddened by a wound with small shot. Leaving the horses in safety, we proceeded on foot to the attack, two of us strategically covering the advance behind the shelter of the cactus; while our *cazador*, José Larrios, boldly strode up the lane. No sooner had he appeared round a bend in the fence than the bull was in full charge. A bullet from the "flank gun," luckily placed, staggered him, and a second from José, crashing on his lowered front, at five yards, ended his career. When the authorities sent out

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next morning to bring in the meat, nothing was found remaining except the horns and the hoofs! On another occasion, when driving tandem into the town of P——, we met, face to face, a *novillo* or three-year-old bull which, according to a custom of tauromachian Spain, was being baited in the public streets. We only escaped by driving across the shrubberies and flower-beds of the Alameda. In the former case we received the thanks of the municipality: in the other, were condemned to pay a fine! *

Another ride was saddened by finding on the wayside the body of a murdered man; his mule stood patiently by, and there we left them in the gloom of gathering night. On all the bye-ways of Spain, and along the bridle-paths of the sierras, one sees little memorial tablets or rude wooden crosses, bearing silent witness to such deeds of violence, according to Spanish custom :—

> "Below there in the dusky pass
> Was wrought a murder dread,
> The murdered fell upon the grass,
> Away the murderer fled."†

On more than one occasion our armed hunting-expeditions in the wilds have been mistaken—not perhaps without reason, so far as external appearances go—for a gang of *mala gente;* and their sudden appearance has struck dire dismay in the breasts of peaceful peasants and *arrieros,* with convoys of corn-laden donkeys, till reassured by the brazen voice of Blas or Antonio—"*Olé, amigos! Aqui no hay mano negra, ni blanca tampoco!*"—which we give in

* An amusing little instance of Spanish justice arose out of this:—Having refused to pay the fine, no further steps were taken for its recovery, nor to uphold the majesty of the law, until, long afterwards, the mulcted man's purse was stolen from his pocket in the bull-ring at P——. On his appearing to prosecute the thief, whose guilt was clearly proved, the Alcalde declined to restore the money, quietly pocketing the purse with the remark, "I think, Señor Caballero, this will just about settle the account between us!" This casual way of administering justice was amusing enough, and consoled one for the feeling of having been "bested."

† There is an excellent description of one of these tragic scenes in Borrow (*Zincali*, i., pp. 48, 49).

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Spanish, as it is not readily translatable at once into English and sense. On two occasions in the Castiles has our advent to some hamlet of the sierra been hailed with joy as that of a strolling company of acrobats! "*Mira los Titeres!*—Here come the mountebanks!" sing out the ragged urchins of the plaza, as our cavalcade with its tent-poles, camp-gear, and, to them, foreign-looking baggage, filed up the narrow street.

It is, however, unnecessary here to recapitulate all the curious incidents of travel, nor to recount the difficulties and troubles by which the wayfarer in Spanish wilds may find himself beset—many such incidents will be found related hereinafter. Sport and the natural beauties of this unknown land are ample reward, and among the other attractions of Andalucian travel may be numbered that of at least a spice of the spirit of adventure.

This flavour of danger gives zest to many a distant ramble: of personal molestation we have luckily had but little experience, although at times associated in sport with *serranos* of more than dubious repute, for the Spaniard is loyal to his friend. At intervals the country has been seething with agrarian discontent and sometimes with overt rebellion. On more than one occasion the bullets have been whistling pretty freely about the streets, and the surrounding *campiña* was, for the time, practically in the hands of an armed, lawless peasantry. In addition to these exceptional but recurrent periods of turmoil and anarchist frenzy, there exists a permanent element of lawlessness in the *contrabandistas* from the coast, who permeate the sierras in all directions with their mule-loads of tobacco, cottons, ribbons, threads, and a thousand odds and ends, many of which have run the blockade of the "lines" of Gibraltar. The propinquity—actual or imaginary—of *mala gente*, often causes real inconvenience while camping in the sierra, such as the necessity of seeking at times the insectiferous refuge of some village *posada* instead of enjoying the freedom of the open hill; or of having to put out the fire at nightfall, which prevents the cooking of dinner, preparing specimens, or writing up notes, &c.

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Life in the Sierras.

As the sinuous, ill-defined mule-track leaves the plain and strikes the rising ground, the signs of man's presence become rapidly scarcer; for none, save the very poorest, live outside the boundaries of town or village. For mile after mile the track traverses the thickets of wild olive and

A *CHOZA*: THE HOME OF THE ANDALUCIAN PEASANT.

lentiscus; here a whole hillside glows with the pink bloom of rhododendron, or acres of asphodel clothe a barren patch; but not so much as a solitary *choza*, the rude reed-built hut of a goatherd, can be seen. Now the path merges in the bed of some winter torrent, rugged and boulder-strewn, but shaded with bay and laurestinus, and a fringe of magnificent oleanders; anon we flounder through deep deposits of alluvial mud bordered by waving

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brakes of giant canes and briar, presently to strike again the upward track through evergreen forests of chestnut and cork-oak.

The silence and solitude of hours—that perfect loneliness characteristic of highland regions—is broken at last by a human greeting so unexpected and startling, that the rider instinctively checks his horse, and grasps the gun which hangs in the slings by his side. But alarm is soon allayed as a pair of Civil Guards on their well-appointed mounts emerge from some sheltering thicket, and command the way. The *guardias civiles* patrol the Spanish hills in pairs by day and night, for it is through the passes of the sierra that the inland towns are supplied with contraband from the coast, and all travellers are subject to the scrutiny of these sharp-eyed cavalry. Yet, despite the vigilance of this fine corps and their coadjutors the carbineers, the smuggler manages to live and to drive a thriving trade. Possessing a beast of marvellous agility and tried endurance, he carries his cargo of cottons or tobacco—the unexcised output of Málaga or Gibraltar—across the sierras, by devious paths and break-neck passes which would appear impracticable, save to a goat; and this, too, generally by night.

Towns are few and far between among the mountains, and the rare villages often cluster picturesquely on the ridge of some stupendous crag like eagles' eyries: positions chosen for their strength centuries ago, and nothing changes in Spain. It is not considered safe for well-to-do people to live on their possessions of cork-woods and cattle-runs, and few of that class are ever to be seen in the sierras, while those whom business or necessity takes from one town to another naturally choose the route which is, as they term it, "*más acompañado*," *i.e.*, most frequented, even though it be three times as long—in Spanish phrase, "*no hay atajo sin trabajo*." A wanderer from these *veredas* is looked upon with a suspicion which experience has shown is not ill-founded.

One evidence of human presence is, however, inevitably in sight—the blue, curling smoke of the charcoal-burners,

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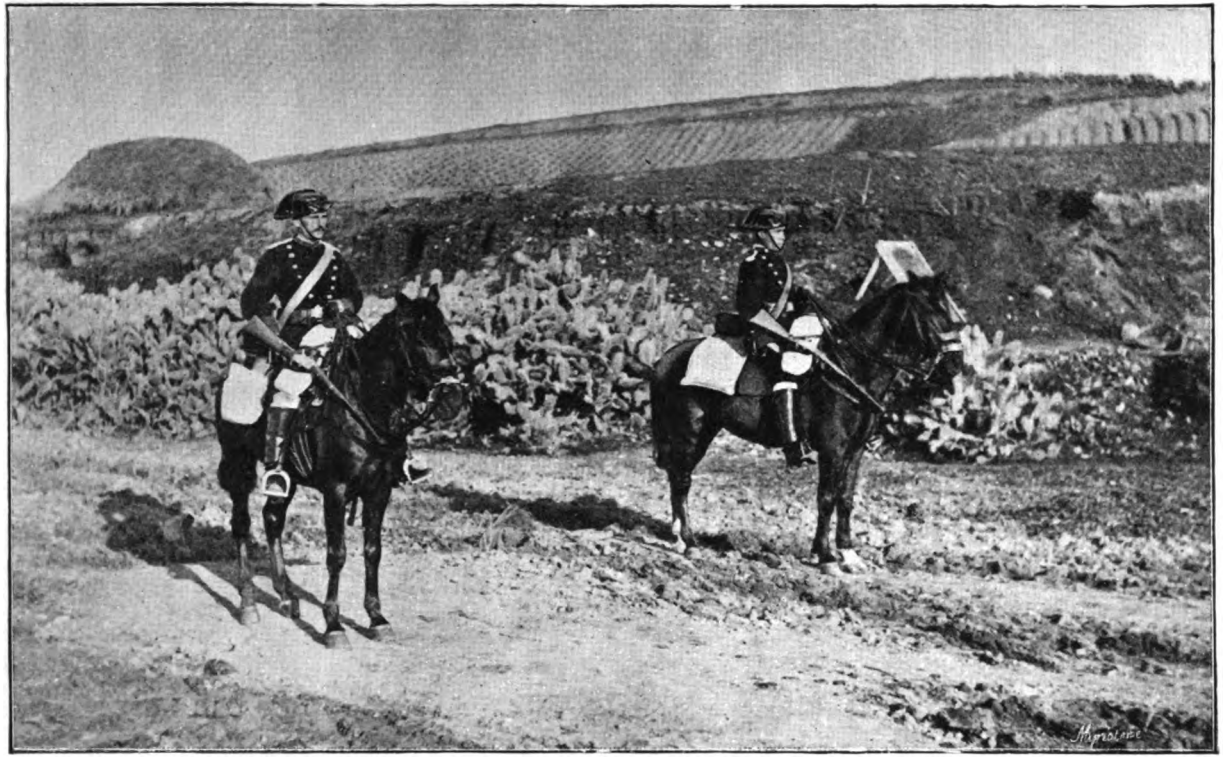

Plate III. PAIR OF CIVIL GUARDS—JEREZ. Page 14.

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the sign of a wasteful process that is ruthlessly destroying the silent beauties of the sierra. Every tree, shrub, or bush has to go to provide fuel for the universal *puchero*. No other firing is used for kitchen purposes; no houses, save a few of the richest, have fireplaces or cooking-apparatus other than the charcoal *anafe*—with its triple blow-holes, through which the smouldering embers are fanned with a grass-woven mat (*see* cut at p. 22)—and its accompaniments, the *casuela* and clay *olla*. The mountain forest is his only resource: yet the careless Andaluz never dreams of the future, or of planting trees to replace those he burns to-day.

Hence year by year the land becomes ever more treeless, barren, and naked; whole hill-ranges which only twenty years ago were densely clad with thickets of varied growth, the lair of boar and roe, are now denuded and disfigured. The blackened circle, the site of a charcoal-furnace, attests the destructive handiwork of man. If one expostulates with the *carboneros*, or laments the destruction wrought, their reply is always the same:—"The land will now become *tierra de pan*," or corn-land, of which there is already more than enough for the labour available.

In some upland valley one comes across a colony of *carboneros* who have settled down on some clearing under agreement with the owner to cut and prepare for market. These woodmen are either paid so much per quintal, or obtain the use of the land in return for clearing and reducing it into order for corn-growing. No rent is asked for the first five years, or if any be paid, a portion of the crop is usually the landlord's share. During the first few years, these disafforested lands are highly productive, the virgin soil, enriched by carbonized refuse, yielding as much as sixty bushels to the acre. The *carboneros* lead a lonely life, except when their sequestered colony is enlivened by the arrival of the *arrieros* with their donkey-teams, to load up the produce for the nearest towns.

Fortunately for the Spanish forests, there are two circumstances that tend to limit their destruction. First

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there is the value of the cork-oak; for, besides its bark, which is stripped and sold every seven years, its crops of acorns fatten droves of shapely black swine during autumn and winter, and a substance is obtained beneath the bark which is used in curing leather. Hence the forests of noble *alcornoques* escape the ruthless hatchet of the *carbonero*. The other limit is the cost of transport which restricts his operations to within a certain distance of the towns which form his market. Beyond this radius the forests retain their native pristine beauty: under their shade are pastured herds of cattle, and a rude hut, built of undressed stones and thatched with reeds, forms the lonely *casa* of the herdsman. By day and night he guards his cattle or goats, often having to sleep on the hill, or under the scant shelter of a lentisco, for which he receives about eightpence a day, with an allowance of bread, oil, salt, and vinegar. His wife and children of course share his lonely lot, their only touch with the outer world being a chance visit, once or twice a year, to their native village.

Our rough friend, clad in leather or woolly sheepskin, is a sportsman by nature, and can "hold straight" on his favourite quarry, the rabbit, whose habits he thoroughly understands. The walls of his hut are seldom unadorned with an ancient fowling-piece: generally a converted "flinter," modernized with percussion lock, and having an enormous exterior spring for its motive power. When the long, honey-combed barrel has been duly fed with Spanish powder from his cork-stoppered cow's horn, the quantity settled by eye-measurement in the palm of his hand, a wisp of palmetto leaf well rammed home, and a similar process gone through with the shot from a leather pouch, he may be trusted to give a good account of darting bunny or rattle-winged red-leg. Poor fellow! the respect and love he bears for his old favourite receive a rude shock when the power of modern combinations of wood-powder, choke-bore, and Purdey barrels have been successfully and successively demonstrated. But it is only after repeated proofs that his lifelong faith in the unique powers of that old *escopeta* begins to shake.

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Then it is a study to watch that bronzed and swarthy face, after a long and clean right-and-left, and deep is the concentrated expressiveness of the single untranslatable word he utters. The first opportunity is taken to have a quiet examination of the English gun and cartridges, and with what respect he handles these latest developments of power and precision! One cannot help fearing that upon his next miss some particle of mistrust may, with a sportsman's facility of excuse, find the fault in his old and trusted friend: or that his ever-ready explanation, "*las polvoras estaban frias*," *i.e.*, the powder was *cold!* will be associated with treasonable doubts of his old Brown Bess. We hope not. Good, honest fellow, may he ever remain content and satisfied with the old gun, for it affords almost the only solace of his lonely life!

In this rough herdsman there beats the kindliest heart: there exist the best feelings of hospitality as he offers you, a brother sportsman, the shelter of his hut and a share of his humble fare, offered with the simple unaffected ease of an equal, and the natural grace characteristic of his class throughout the south of Spain.

Besides these humble and harmless inhabitants, the Spanish sierras have also ever afforded a refuge for the brigand and outlaw, and many deeds of murder and violence are associated with these wild regions. Until the year 1889 the mountain land was dominated by two famous villains known as Vizco el Borje and Melgarez, his lieutenant, who commanded a band of desperadoes, the scourge and dread of the whole southern sierra, from Gibraltar to Almería. Vizco el Borje held human life cheap: he stuck at no murder, though he sought not bloodshed, for his tactics were to take alive and hold to ransom. All sorts of tales are told of the courage and generosity of this Spanish Robin Hood. Vizco el Borje robbed only from the rich, and was profuse in the distribution of money and plunder among the peasantry. But whatever redeeming features may have existed in this robber chief, Melgarez, his lieutenant, is a very fiend of

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malice and cruelty, revelling in bloodshed and revolting butcheries.*

To those unacquainted with Spain, "la tierra de vice versâ," as they themselves call it, it must appear a mystery how this robber-band could remain at large, practical masters of great areas, in defiance of law and order, and of the civil and military power of Spain. But there is less difficulty for those who can see to read between the lines, in a land where, according to one of their own authors, every one has his price, that protection is afforded to the outlaws by those in place and power, on condition that they and their properties remain unmolested.†

In another chapter we will relate a couple of episodes which have occurred within our personal knowledge, and which will serve to illustrate the robbers' methods of procedure, and the condition of personal security among the sierras of Southern Spain.

* In a subsequent chapter we give some account of the life—and death—of Vizco el Borje.

† *See* "El Bandolerismo," by El Excmº. é Ilmo. Señor Don Julian de Zugasti, late Governor of the province of Córdova (Madrid, 1876).

A WATER-CARRIER.

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Plate IV. DAUGHTERS OF ANDALUCIA. Page 19.

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A Night at a Posada.

The wayfarer has been travelling all day across the scrub-clad wastes, fragrant with rosemary and wild thyme, without perhaps seeing a human being beyond a stray shepherd or a band of nomad gypsies encamped amidst the green palmettos. Towards night he reaches some small village where he seeks the rude *posada*. He sees his horse provided with a good feed of barley and as much broken straw as he can eat. He is himself regaled with one dish—probably the *olla*, or a *guiso* (stew) of kid, either of them, as a rule, of a rich red-brick hue from the colour of the red pepper, or capsicum in the *chorizo* or sausage, which is an important (and potent) component of most Spanish dishes. The steaming *olla* will presently be set on a low table before the large wood-fire, and, with the best of crisp white bread and wine, the traveller enjoys his meal in company with any other guest that may have arrived at the time—be he muleteer or hidalgo. What a fund of information may be picked up during that promiscuous supper—there will be the housewife, the barber and the Padre of the village, perhaps a goatherd come down from the mountains, a muleteer, and a charcoal-burner or two, each ready to tell his own tale, or enter into friendly discussion with the *Inglés*. Then, as you light your *breva*, a note or two struck on the guitar fall on ears predisposed to be pleased.

How well one knows those first few opening notes! No occasion to ask that it may go on: it will all come in time, and one knows there is a merry evening in prospect. One by one the villagers drop in, and an ever-widening circle is formed around the open hearth; rows of children collect, even the dogs draw around to look on. The player and the company gradually warm up till couplet after couplet of pathetic "*malagueñas*" follow in quick succession. These songs are generally topical, and almost always extempore: and as most Spaniards can—or rather are anxious to—sing, one enjoys many verses that are very prettily as well as wittily conceived.

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But the girls must dance, and find no difficulty in getting partners to join them. The *malagueñas* cease, and one or perhaps two couples stand up, and a pretty sight they afford! Seldom does one see girl-faces so full of fun

DANCERS WITH CASTANETS.

and so supremely happy, as they adjust the castanets, and one damsel steps aside to whisper something sly to a sister or friend. And now the dance commences: observe there is no slurring or attempt to save themselves in any movement. Each step and figure is carefully executed, but

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with easy spontaneous grace and precision, both by the girl and her partner.

Though two or more pairs may be dancing at once, each is quite independent of the others, and only dance to themselves: nor do the partners ever touch each other.* The steps are difficult and somewhat intricate, and there is plenty of scope for individual skill, though grace of movement and supple pliancy of limb and body are almost universal and are strong points in dancing both the fandango and minuet. Presently the climax of the dance

THE VILLAGE POSADA.

approaches. The notes of the guitar grow faster and faster: the man—a stalwart shepherd lad—leaps and bounds around his pirouetting partner, and the steps, though still well ordered and in time, grow so fast one can hardly follow their movements.

Now others rise and take the places of the first dancers,

* We have seen an exception to this in the mountain villages of the Castiles, where, on *fiesta* nights, a sort of rude valse is danced in the open street.

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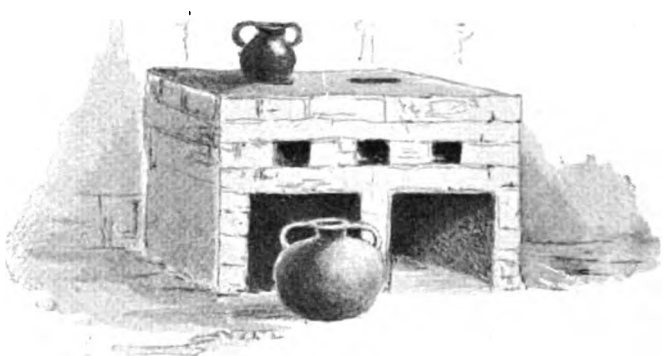
and so the evening passes: perhaps a few glasses of *aguardiente* are handed round—certainly much tobacco is smoked—the older folks keep time to the music with hand-clapping, and all is good nature and merriment.

What is it that makes the recollection of such evenings so pleasant? Is it merely the fascinating simplicity of the music and freedom of the dance; is it the spectacle of those weird, picturesque groups, bronze-visaged men and dark-eyed maidens, all lit up by the blaze of the great wood-fire on the hearth and low-burning oil-lamp suspended from the rafters? Perhaps it is only the remembrance of many happy evenings spent among these same people since our boyhood. This we can truly say, that when at last you turn in to sleep you feel happy and secure among a peasantry with whom politeness and sympathy are the only passports required to secure to you both friendship and protection if required. Nor is there a pleasanter means of forming some acquaintance with Spanish country life and customs than a few evenings spent thus at farm-house or village-inn in any retired district of laughter-loving Andalucia.



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CHAPTER II.

A BOAR-HUNT IN THE SIERRA.

LATE one March evening we encamped on the spurs of a great Andalucian sierra. Away in the west, beyond the rolling prairie across which we had been riding all day, the sun was slowly sinking from view, and to the eastward the massive pile of San Christoval reflected his gorgeous hues in a soft rosy blush, which mantled its snow-streaked summit. Below in the valley we could discern the little white hermitage of La Aina, once the prison of a British subject, a Mr. Bonnell, who, captured in 1870* near Gibraltar, was carried thither by *sequestradores*, and concealed in this remote spot till the stipulated ransom had been lodged by the Governor of Gibraltar in the consulate at Cadiz: an incident which led to unpleasant correspondence between the British and Spanish Governments, and which was luckily closed by the tragic deaths of all the offenders.

These miscreants had also formed a plan for an attack upon a private house at Utrera; but their intentions having become known (through treachery) to the Civil Guards, the latter surrounded the house, and drove the robbers into the *patio*, where a simultaneous volley terminated the careers of the whole crew. For advancing the ransom, £6,000 (which, after various adventures, involving more bloodshed, fell finally into the hands of a

* The sporting incidents here narrated occurred twenty years ago, viz., in March, 1872. This was the authors' first shooting expedition *together:* for which reason we place its record in the first chapter.

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fresh robber-gang), the then Governor of Gibraltar was freely "hauled over the coals" in the House of Commons at the time.

Wild tales of similar bearing beguiled the dark hours in the gloom of the forest where our big fire burned cheerily. Despite a fine, warm, winter climate, the Andalucian atmosphere is chilly enough after sundown, and we were glad to draw up close around the blazing logs, where a savoury *olla* was cooking: and afterwards, while enjoying our cigarettes and that delicious "natural" wine of Spain which the British public, like a spoilt child, first cries for and then abuses.

Towards nine o'clock the moon rose, and we continued our journey along the dark defiles of the sierra, pushing a way through evergreen thicket, or silent forest, where the startling cries of the eagle-owl outraged the stillness of night. As far as one could see by the dim moonlight, our course alternated for a long distance between a boulder-strewn ravine and a glacis of smooth sloping rock, steep as a roof, and more suited to the nocturnal gambols of cats than for horsemen. But the Andalucian *jaca* is hardly less sure of foot, and in due course we emerged into a more level valley, where, after riding some miles beneath huge cork-oaks and ilex, we heard at length the distant challenge of our friend Gaspár's big mastiff, and soon the long ride was over, and we entered the portals of the *rancho* which for the succeeding week was to be our home.

Here we were confronted by a nuisance in the non-arrival of the commissariat. The pack-mules, despatched two days in advance, had not turned up. It transpired that the men, loitering away the daylight, as is the custom in Andalucia (and elsewhere), had lost the way in the darkness, almost immediately after leaving the last vestiges of a track, and had bivouaced among the scrub awaiting the break of day. Our resources for the night were thus limited to the scanty contents of the *alforjas* (saddle-bags). We had, however, each provided ourselves with a big sackful of chaff at the last outpost of the corn-

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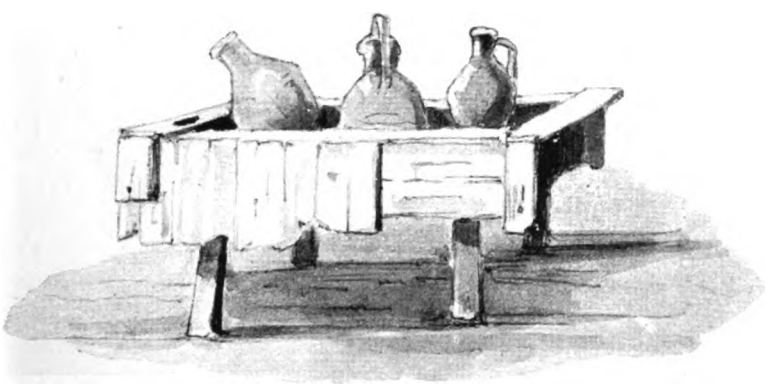
lands—chaff, or rather broken straw, being the staple food of the Spanish horse; and these now formed our beds, though their softness decreased nightly by reason of the constant inroads on their substance made by our Rosinantes. Otherwise the naked stone-paved room was absolutely innocent of either furniture or food; yet we were happy enough, as, rolled in our *mantas*, we lay down to sleep on those long pokes.

Early in the morning the mountaineers began to assemble in the courtyard of the rancho. Light of build as a rule, sinewy, and bronzed to a copper hue, looking as if



"FURNITURE."

their very blood was parched and dried up by tobacco and the fierce southern sun, and with *navajas* stuck in their scarlet waistbands, these wild men might each have served as a melodramatic desperado. Three brothers of our host had ridden up from a distant farm; there was old Christoval, the ready-witted squatter on the adjoining rancho, a cheery old fellow, carrying fun and laughter wherever he went; last came the Padre from the nearest hill-village (Paterna), whose sporting instinct had made light work of the long and early ride across the sierra to join our *batida*. Alonzo, the herdsman, who added to his pastoral knowledge an intimate acquaintance with the wild

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beasts of his native mountains, was placed in command of the beaters, a motley, picturesque group with their leathern accoutrements and scarlet *fajas*. Of dogs, we had four *podencos*, tall, stiff-built, wiry-haired "terrier-greyhounds," fleet of foot, trained to find and harass the boar, to force him to break covert, but yet so wary at feint and retreat as to avoid the sweep of his tusks. Then there was huge "*Moro*," Don Gaspár's half-mastiff, half-bloodhound, whose staunchness was tested of old, and others of lesser note.

Around our quarters were cultivated clearings of a few

OUR QUARTERS IN THE SIERRA.

acres, fenced with the usual aloe and cactus: otherwise the landscape was one panorama of forest and evergreen brushwood, extending far up the mountain-sides, and towards the barren stony summits. These sierras of Jerez are of no great height relatively—perhaps 3,000 to 4,000 feet—and many of them bear unmistakable evidence of their long struggles with glacial ice in bygone ages—each tall slope consisting of a regular series of vertical bastions, or buttresses, alternating with deep glens in singular uniformity. Their conformation recalled the distant valleys of Spitsbergen, where we have seen the

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power of ice in actual operation, and carving out those grim Arctic hills after a precisely similar pattern. Here, however, dense jungle had for ages replaced the snow, and the wild boar now occupied strongholds where, *possibly*, the reindeer had once ranged in search of scanty lichen. For the season (March) the greenness of all foliage was remarkable; the oaks alone remained naked, and even from their leafless boughs hung luxuriant festoons of ivy and parasitic plants.

The upper end of our valley was shut in by the towering, transverse mass of the Sierra de las Cabras, which terminates hard by, in a fine abrupt gorge or chasm called the Boca de la Foz. It was to the deep-jungled corries which furrow the sides of this chasm that Alonzo had that morning traced to their *camas* some six or eight pig, including a couple of boar of the largest size, and this was to be the scene of our first day's operations.

A pitiable episode occurred while we were surveying our surroundings, and preparing for a start. From close behind, suddenly resounded a peal of strange inhuman laughter, followed by incoherent words; and through the iron bars of a narrow window we discerned the emaciated figure of a man, wild and unkempt of aspect, and whose eagle-like claws grasped the barriers of his cell—a poor lunatic. No connected replies could we get—nothing but vacuous laughter and gibbering chatter: now he was at the theatre and quoted magic jargon; now supplicating the mercy of a judge; then singing a stanza of some old song, to break off as suddenly into a fierce denunciation of one of *us* as the cause of all his troubles. Poor wretch! He had once been a successful lawyer and advocate, but having developed signs of madness, which increased with years, the once popular Carlos B—— was now reduced to the wretched durance of this iron-girt cell; his only share and view of God's earth just so much of sombre everlasting sierra as the narrow opening permitted. We were told it was hopeless to make any effort to ameliorate his lot—his case was too desperate. What hidden wrongs and outrage exist in a land where no judicial intervention is permitted

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between the "rights" of families and their insane relations (or those whom they may consider such), is only too much open to suspicion.

The day was still young when we mounted and set out for the point where Alonzo's report had led us to hope for success. The first covert tried was a strong jungle flanking the main gorge; but this, and a second *batida*, proved blank, only a few foxes appearing, and a wild cat was shot. Two roe-deer were reported to have broken back, and several mongoose, or ichneumon, were also observed during these drives, but were always permitted to pass. The Spanish ichneumon (*Herpestes widdringtoni*), being peculiar to the Peninsula, deserves a passing remark; it is a strange, grizzly-grey beast, shaggy as a badger, but more slim in build, with the brightest of bright black eyes, and a very long bushy tail. Owing to his habit of eating snakes and other reptiles (in preference, it would seem, to rabbits, &c.), the ichneumon stinks beyond other beasts of prey. A large black ichneumon happened to be the first game that fell to the writer's rifle in Spain, and was carefully stowed in the mule-panniers—never to be seen again; for no sooner were our backs turned, than the men discreetly pitched out the malodorous trophy.

As we approached our third beat—the main *manchas*, or thickets of the Boca de la Foz, the "rootings" and recent sign of pig became frequent, and we advanced to our allotted positions in silence, leaving the horses picketed far in the rear.

The line of guns occupied the ridge of a natural amphitheatre, which dipped sharply away beneath us, the centre choked with strong thorny jungle. On the left towered a range of limestone crags, the right flank being hemmed in by huge uptilted rocks, like ruined towers, and white as marble. One of us occupied the centre, the other guarded a pass among these pinnacle rocks on the right. While waiting at our posts we could descry the beaters, mere dots, winding along the glen, 1,500 feet below. The mountain scenery was superb; but no sound broke the stillness save the distant tinkle of a goat-bell; nor was

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there a sign of life except that feathered recluse, the blue rock-thrush, (in Spanish "*solitario*,") and far overhead floated great tawny vultures. Ten minutes of profound silence, and then the distant shouts and cries of the beaters in the depths beneath told us the fray had begun.

The heart of the jungle—all lentisk, or mimosa and thorn, interlaced with briar—being impenetrable, the efforts of our men were confined to directing the dogs, and by incessant noise to drive the game upwards. First a tall grey fox stole stealthily past, looked me full in the face and went on without increasing his speed; then a pair of red-legs, unconscious of a foe, sped by like 100-yard "sprinters"—a marvellous speed of foot have these birds on the roughest ground, and well are Spanish by-ways named *caminos de perdices!* Then the crash of hound-music proclaimed that the nobler quarry was at home. This boar proved to be one of those grizzly monsters of which we were specially in search; his lair a chaotic jumble of boulders islanded amid deepest thicket. Here he held his ground, declining to recognize in his noisy aggressors a superior force; and, though "Moro" and the boar-hounds speedily reinforced the skirmishers of the pack, the old tusker showed no sign of abandoning his stronghold. For minutes, that seemed like hours, the conflict raged stationary; the sonorous baying of the boar-hounds, the "yapping" of the smaller dogs, and shouts of the mountaineers, blended with the howl of an incautious *podenco* as he received his death-rip—all these formed a chorus of sounds which carried sufficient excitement to the sentinel guns above. Such and kindred moments are worth months of ordinary life.

The actual scene of war lay some half-mile below, hence no immediate issue was probable or expected; then came a crashing of the brushwood on my front, and a three-parts-grown boar dashed straight for the narrow pass where the writer barred the way. The suddenness of the encounter was disconcerting, and the first shot was a miss, the bullet, all but grazing his back and splashing

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on the grey rock beyond, and time barely remained to jump aside to avoid collision. The left barrel told with better effect: a stumble as he received it, followed by a frantic grunt as an ounce of lead penetrated his vitals, and the beast plunged headlong among the brushwood, his life-blood dyeing the weather-blanched rocks and dark green palmettos. There for a moment he lay, kicking and groaning; but ere the cold steel could administer a quietus, he regained his legs and dashed straight back. Whether that

A STRAIGHT CHARGE.

charge was prompted by revenge, or was merely an effort to regain the thickets he had just left, matters not; for a third bullet, at two yards' distance, laid him lifeless.

During this interlude, though it had only occupied a few moments, the main combat below was approaching its climax. The old boar had at length left his hold, and after sundry sullen stands and promiscuous skirmishes with the hounds, he took to flight. Showing first on the centre, he was covered for some seconds by a ·450 express;

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Plate V. THAT OLD TUSKER. Page 31.

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but not breaking covert, no shot could be fired, and when he at last appeared in view, he was trotting up the stony slopes on the extreme left. Here a rifle-shot at long range broke a fore-leg below the shoulder. This was the turning point: the wounded boar, no longer able to face the hill, wheeled and retreated to the thickets below, scattering the dogs and passing through the beaters at marvellous speed, considering his disabled condition. And now commenced the hue and cry and the real hard work for those who meant to see the end and earn the spoils of war. Soon "Moro's" deep voice told he had the tusker at bay, down in the defile, far below. What followed in that hurly-burly—that mad scramble through brake and thicket, down crag and scree—is impossible to tell. Each man only knows what he did himself—or did not do. We can answer for three; one of these seated himself on a rock and lit a cigarette; the others, ten minutes later, arrived on the final scene—one minus his nether garments and sundry patches of skin, but in time to take part in the death of as grand a boar as ever roamed the Spanish sierras.

First to arrive was Gaspár himself, familiar with every by-way and goat-track on the hills, and nervous for the safety of his hound; but only a few seconds before the denuded *Inglés*. In a pool of the rock-strewn brook, the beast stood at bay, "Moro's" teeth clenched in one ear and two *podencos* attacking in flank and rear. Gaspár elected to finish the business with the knife, fixed bayonet-wise, but the horn haft slipped from the muzzle, and a moment later two simultaneous bullets had closed the affair.

One by one the scattered guns turned up: some, who had taken a circuitous course, arriving before others whose ardour had led them to follow direct—so dense was the brushwood and rugged the sierra. A picturesque group stood assembled around the blood-dyed pool with its wild environment and bold mountain background; but rejoicings were tempered by the loss of two of our *podencos*, one having been killed outright, the other

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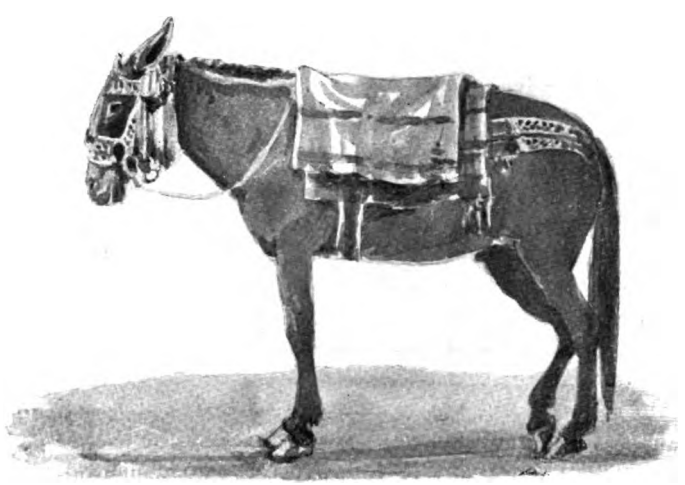
found in a hopelessly wounded condition at the point of the first conflict.

The boar proved a magnificent brute, one of the true grey-brindled type—*de los Castellanos*, weighing over 300 lbs. The wild-boars of the sierras run larger than those of the plains, some being *said* to reach 400 lbs. Beneath the outer grizzly bristles lies a reddish woolly fur.

We were soon mounted and steering for another *mancha*, where, late in the afternoon, two sows and a small boar were found and driven forward through the line of guns. One fell to a fine shot from our host's brother, the others escaping scathless. Night was already upon us ere the party re-assembled, and we rode off amidst the shadows of the forest-glades, to fight the battles of the day again and again round the cheery blaze in the courtyard of our mountain-home.



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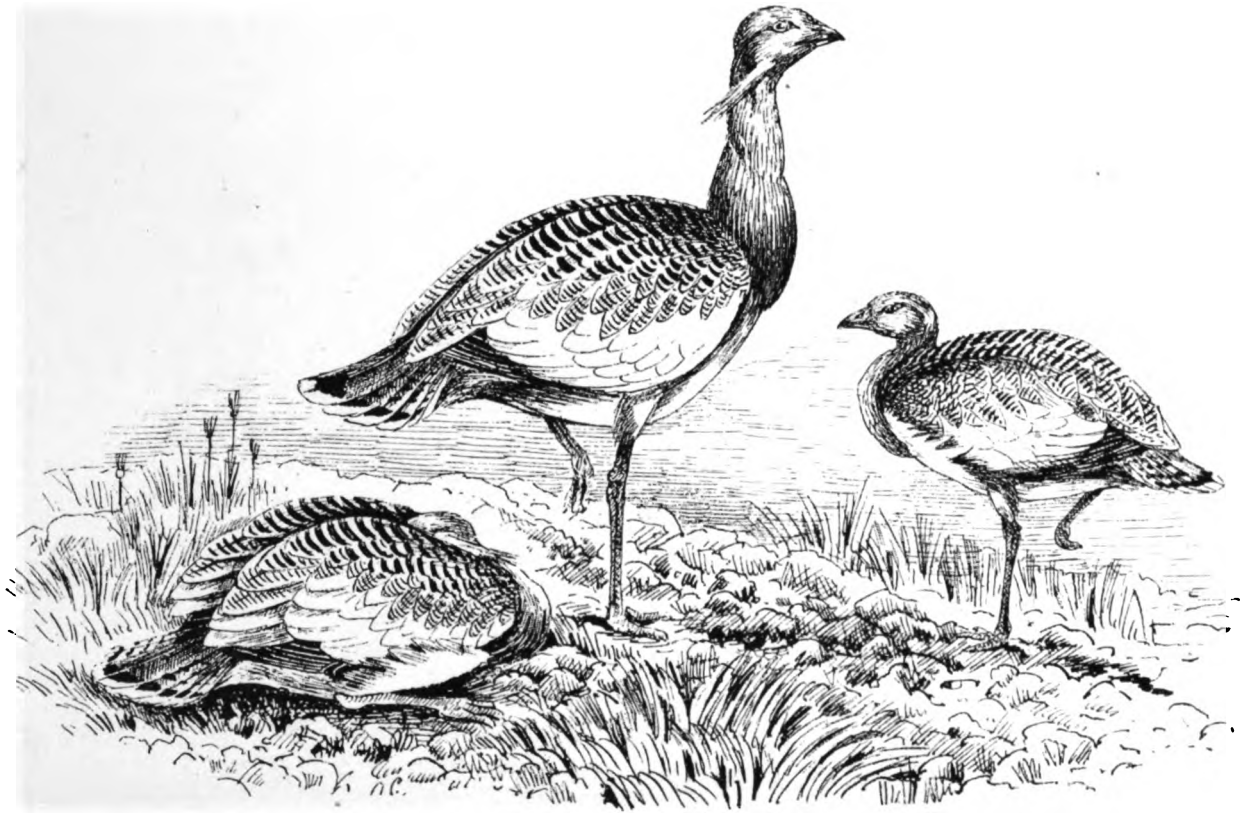

Plate VI. BUSTARDS ON THE BARRENS—WINTER. "A First Shade of Suspicion." Page 33.

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CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT BUSTARD.

A CHARACTERISTIC and withal a truly noble and ornamental object is the Great Bustard, on those vast stretches of silent corn-lands which form his home. Among the things of sport are few more attractive scenes than a band of bustards at rest. Bring your field-glass to bear on that gathering which you see yonder, basking in the sunshine, in full enjoyment of their siesta. There are four- or five-and-twenty of them, and how immense they look against the background of sprouting corn that covers the landscape: well may a stranger mistake them for deer or goats. Most of the birds are sitting turkey-fashion, their heads sunk among the feathers: others stand in drowsy yet half-suspicious attitudes, their broad backs resplendent with those mottled hues of true game-colour, their lavender necks and well-poised heads contrasting with the snowy whiteness of their lower plumage. The bustards are dotted in groups over an acre or two of the gently sloping ground, the highest part of which is occupied by a single big *barbudo*, a bearded veteran, the sentinel of the party. From his elevated position he estimates what degree of danger each living thing that moves on the open region around may threaten to his companions and himself. Mounted men cause him less concern than those on foot: a horseman slowly directing a circuitous course may even approach to within a couple of hundred yards of him before he takes alarm. It was the head and neck of this sentry that first appeared to our distant view, and disclosed the whereabouts of the game. He, too, has seen us, and is even now considering whether there is sufficient cause

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for putting his convoy in motion. If we disappear below the level of his range he will settle the point negatively; setting us down as only some of those agricultural nuisances which so often cause him alarm, but which his experience has shown to be generally harmless—for attempts on his life are few and far between.

Another charming spectacle it is in the summer-time to watch a pack of bustards about sunset, all busy with their evening feed among the grasshoppers on a thistle-covered plain. They are working against time, for it will soon be too dark for them to catch such lively prey. With quick, darting step they run to and fro, picking up one grasshopper after another with unerring aim, and so intent on their feed that the best chance of the day is then offered to their pursuer, when greed, for the moment, supplants caution, and vigilance is relaxed. But even now a man on foot stands no chance of coming near them; his approach is observed from afar, all heads are up above the thistles, all eyes intent on the intruder: a moment or two of doubt, two quick steps and a spring, and the strong wings of every bird in the band flap in slowly-rising motion. The tardiness and apparent difficulty in rising from the ground which these birds exhibit is well expressed in their Spanish name *Avetarda*,* and is recognized in their scientific cognomen of *Otis tarda*. Once on the wing, the whole pack is off, with wide swinging flight, to the highest ground in the neighbourhood.

During the greater part of the year the bustards are far too wary to be obtained by the farm-hands and shepherds who see them every day; and so accustomed are the peasants to the sight of these noble birds that little or no notice is taken of them. Their haunts and habits not being studied, their pursuit is regarded as impracticable. There is, however, one period of the year when the Great Bustard falls an easy prey to the clumsiest of gunners. During the long Andalucian summer a torrid sun has drunk up every brook and stream that crosses the cultivated lands:

* *Avetarda* is old Spanish, the modern spelling being *Abutarda*.

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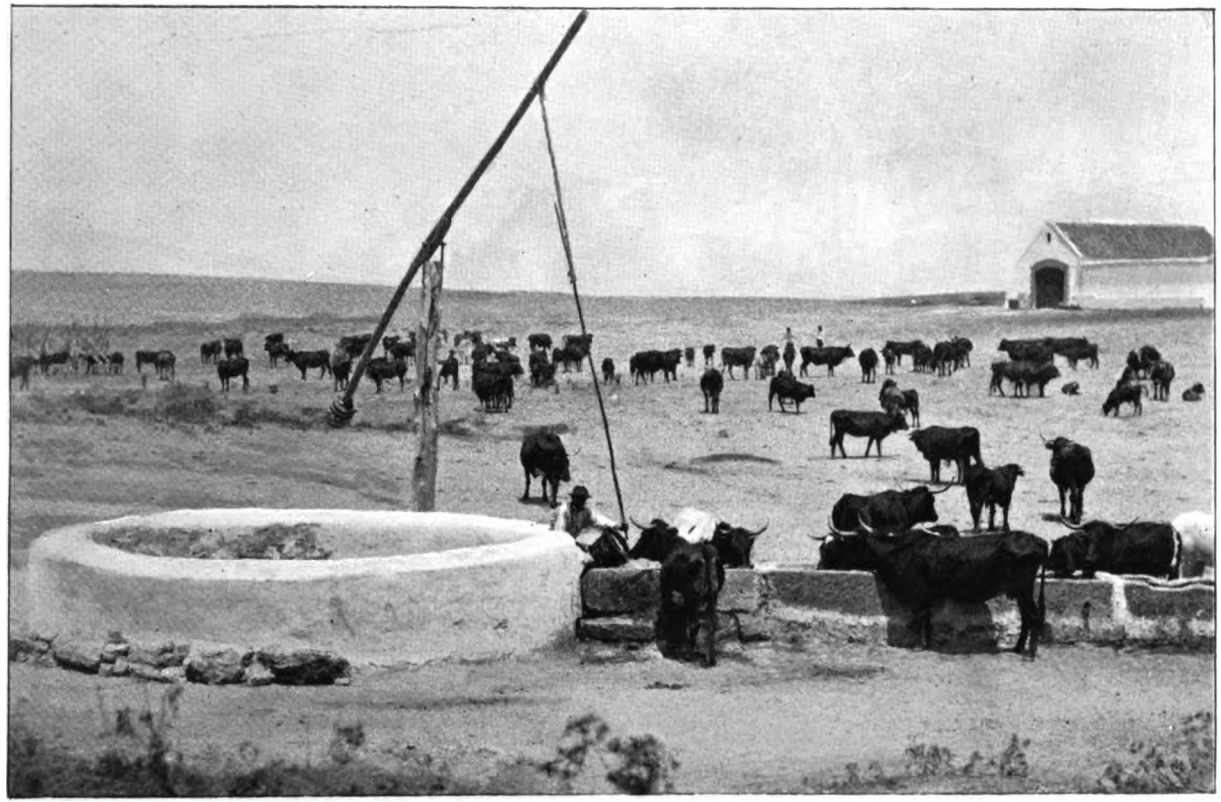

Plate VII. WATERING THE CATTLE—SUMMER TIME. Page 35.

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the chinky, cracked mud, which in winter formed the bed of shallow lakes and lagoons, now yields no drop of moisture for bird or beast. The larger rivers still carry their waters from sierra to sea, but a more adaptive genius than that of the Spanish people is required to utilize these for purposes of irrigation. All water required for the cattle is drawn up from wells: the old-world lever with its bucket at one end and counterpoise at the other, has to provide for the needs of all. These wells are distributed all over the plains. As the herdsmen put the primitive contrivance into operation and swing up bucket after bucketful of cool water, the cattle crowd around, impatient to receive it as it rushes along the stone troughing. The thirsty animals drink their fill, splashing and wasting as much as they consume, so that a puddle is always formed about these *bebideros*. The moisture only extends a few yards, gradually diminishing till the trickling streamlet is lost in the famishing soil.

These moist places are a fatal trap to the bustard. Before dawn one of the farm-people will conceal himself so as to command at short range all points of the miniature swamp. A slight hollow is dug for the purpose, having clods arranged around, between which the gun can be levelled with murderous accuracy. As day begins to dawn, the bustard will take a flight in the direction of the well, alighting at a point some few hundred yards distant. They satisfy themselves that no enemy is about, and then, with cautious, stately step, make for their morning draught. One big bird steps on ahead of the rest: as he cautiously draws near, he stops now and again to assure himself that all is right, and that his companions are coming too—these are not in a compact body, but following at intervals of a few yards. The leader has reached the spot where he drank yesterday; now he finds he must go a little nearer to the well, as the streamlet has been diverted; another bird follows close; both lower their heads to drink; the gunner has them in line—at twenty paces there is no escape: the trigger is pressed, and two magnificent bustards are done to death. Should the man be provided with a

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second barrel (which is not usual), a third victim may be added to his morning's spoils.

Large numbers of bustards are destroyed thus every summer. It is deadly work, and certain. Were the haunts of the birds more studied, bustards might be annihilated on these treacherous lines.

Another primitive mode of capturing the Great Bustard is also practised in winter. The increased value of game during the colder months induces the bird-catchers, who supply the markets with myriads of ground-larks, linnets and buntings, occasionally to direct their skill towards the capture of the *avetardas*. They employ the same means as for the taking of the small fry—the *cencerro*, or cattle-bell, and dark lantern. As most cattle carry the *cencerro* around their necks, the sound of the bells at close quarters by night causes no alarm to the ground birds. The bird-catcher, with his bright candle gleaming before its reflector and the cattle-bell jingling at his wrist, prowls nightly over the stubbles and wastes in search of roosting birds. Any number of bewildered victims can thus be gathered, for larks and such-like birds fall into a helpless state of panic when once focussed in the bright rays of the lantern.

When the bustard is the object of pursuit, two men are required, one of whom carries a gun. The pack of bustard will be carefully watched during the afternoon, and not lost sight of when night comes until their sleeping-quarters are ascertained. When quite dark, the tinkling of the *cencerro* will be heard, and a ray of light will surround the devoted bustards, charming or frightening them—whichever it may be—into still life. As the familiar sound of the cattle-bell becomes louder and nearer, the ray of light brighter and brighter, and the surrounding darkness more intense, the bustards are too charmed, or too dazed, to fly. Then comes the report, and a charge of heavy shot works havoc among them. As bands of bustards are numerous, this poaching plan might be carried out night after night: but, luckily, the bustards will not stand the same experience twice. On a second attempt being made, they are off as soon as the light is

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seen approaching. Hence the use of the *cencerro* is precarious, at least as regards the bustards.

Except for the two clumsy artifices above described, the bustards are left practically unmolested; their wildness and the open nature of their haunts defy all the strategy of native fowlers. Their eggs are deposited on the ground when it is covered with the green April corn: incubation and the rearing of the young takes place amid the security of vast silent stretches of waving corn. The young bustards grow with the wheat, and ere it is cut are able to take care of themselves. It is just after harvest that the game is most numerous and conspicuous. The stubbles are then bare, and even the fallows which during spring bear heavy swathes of weeds, have now lost all their covert. The summer sun has pulverized and consumed all vegetation, and, but for a few chance patches of thistles, charlock or *aramagos*, there is nothing that can screen the birds from view.

A more legitimate method of outwitting the Great Bustard is practised at this—the summer—period. After harvest, when the country is being cleared of crops, or when all are cut and in sheaf, the bustards become accustomed daily to see the bullock-carts (*carros*) passing with creaking wheel, on all sides, carrying off the sheaves from the stubbles to the *era*, or levelled ground where the grain is trodden out, Spanish-fashion, by teams of mares. The loan of a *carro*, with its pair of bullocks and a man to guide them, having been obtained from one of the corn-farms, the cart is rigged up with *esteras*—that is, an esparto matting is stretched round the poles which, fixed on the sides, serve to hold the load of sheaves in position. A few sacks of straw thrown upon the floor of the cart serve to save one, in some small degree, from the merciless jolting of this primitive conveyance on rough ground. One, two, or even three guns can find room in the *carro*, the driver lying forward, near enough to direct the bullocks and urge them on by means of a goad, which he works through a hole in the *esteras*.

At a distance this moving battery looks a good deal like

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a load of straw. The search for bustard now begins, and well do we remember the terrible suffocating heat we have endured, shut up in this thing for hours in the blazing days of July and August. Bustards being found, the bullocks are cleverly directed, gradually circling inwards, the goad during the final moments freely applied. When the cart is stopped, instantly the birds rise. Previous to finding game, each man has made for himself a hole in the *estera*, through which he has been practising the handling of his gun. So far as practice goes, his arrangements appear perfect enough; but somehow, when the cart stops, the birds rise, and the moment for action has arrived, the game seems always to fly in a direction you cannot command, or where the narrow slit will not allow you to cover them. Hence we have adopted the plan of sliding off behind just as the cart was pulling up, thus firing the two barrels with much greater freedom. We have enjoyed excellent sport by this means, and succeeded in bringing many bustards to bag during the day. And after a long summer-day shut up in this rude contrivance, creaking and jolting across stubble and fallow, a deep cool draught of *gazpacho* at the farm is indeed delicious to parched throats and tongues.

Another system by which the Great Bustard can be brought to bag is by driving, and right royal sport it affords at certain seasons. The most favourable period is the early spring—especially the month of March. The male birds are then in their most perfect plumage and condition, with the gorgeous chestnut ruff fully developed, and in the early mornings they present an imposing spectacle, as with lowered neck, trailing wings, and expanded tail, they strut round and round in stately circles—"*echando la rueda*"—before an admiring harem, somewhat after the fashion of the blackcock; though whether the bustard is polygamous is a question we discuss in another chapter. At this season (March) the corn is sufficiently grown to afford covert for the gunners, but not to conceal these great birds when feeding, *i.e.*, about girth-deep.

The system of the *ojéo* or bustard-drive is as follows:—

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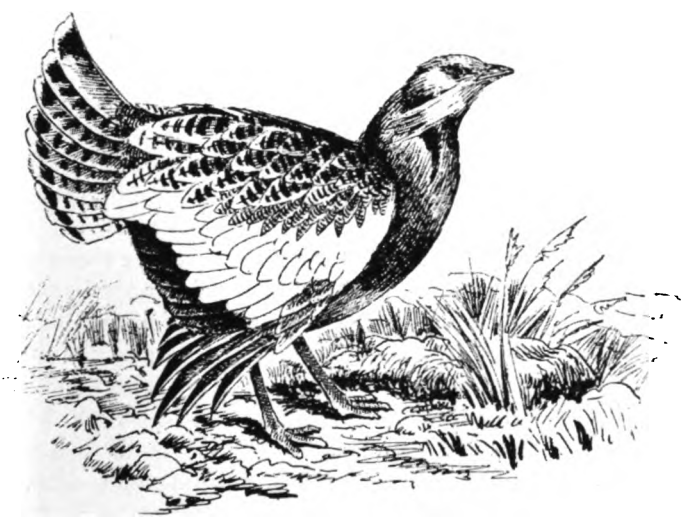
The scene of operations must be reached as soon after daybreak as possible, which necessitates an early start and a long matutinal ride; for bustards feed morning and evening, and during the midday hours lie down for a siesta among the corn or rough herbage, when it is mere chance work finding them on so vast an area. Hence an early start is necessary. When likely corn-lands are reached, *one* man advances to reconnoitre: having descried a band of bustards and taken a comprehensive view of the surrounding country, he must at once decide on his line of action.



GREAT BUSTARD—"ECHANDO LA RUEDA."

The bustards are perhaps a mile away: the leader must therefore have a "good eye for a country"—much, in fact, depends on his rapid intuition of the lie of the land and local circumstances, his knowledge of the habits and flights of the birds, and his ability to utilize the *smallest* natural advantages of ground or cover—*small* indeed these are sure to be, invisible to untrained eye. The first great object is to bring the guns, unseen, as near the game as possible. If any miscalculation occurs, and the advancing sportsmen expose themselves for a moment,

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then, very literally, "the game is up" and the pack escapes unharmed. When the birds are found settled on a hillside, it is sometimes not difficult to place the guns on the reverse slope, and so near the summit that the sportsman, stretched full length on the earth, has the birds within shot almost before their danger is exposed. But it must be noted that the sight of the bustard is extraordinarily keen, and the slightest unusual object on the monotonous plain is sure to be detected. As a rule, if the gunner can see the bustards, they too will have seen him and will swerve from their course before approaching within range.

But, generally speaking (except during the spring-shooting), there is hardly a vestige of anything like covert for the gunner: sometimes by lucky chance, a dry water-course may be available, or a solitary clump of palmettos —even a few dead thistles may prove invaluable. These two circumstances explain the numerous disappointments that attend bustard-driving on the corn-plains.

Time being allowed to place the guns, two or three men start to ride round the bustards at considerable distance, gradually approaching them from a direction which will incline their flight towards the hidden guns. Through long practice these men become very expert; more than once we have seen a pack of the most stiff-necked undrivable bustards turned in mid-flight by a judicious gallop—executed at the very nick of time—and directed right towards the guns; and we have also known birds so delicately treated that instead of rising before the slowly-advancing horsemen, they have quietly walked away and startled the sportsman by striding over a ridge within a few yards of his prostrate form.

In speaking of hills, ridges, &c., the words are used in a relative sense. Broken ground is the exception in any district much affected by bustard; and therefore the most must be made of the slight undulations which these rolling plains afford. When a party of five or six guns are well placed, it is unusual for the pack to get away without offering a shot to one or more of the sportsmen. Strange to say, they not infrequently escape. We know

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Plate VIII. BUSTARD-DRIVING—THE PACK *"COME WELL IN!"* Page 40.

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not what the cause may be—whether the apparently slow flight—really very fast—or the huge bulk of the birds deceives, or otherwise—yet some of the best shots at ordinary driven game are often perplexed at their bad records against the *avetardas*. Long shots, it is true, are the rule: longer far than one dreams of taking at home—and such ranges require extreme forward allowance: yet many birds at close quarters are let off.

A memorable sight is a huge *barbon*, or male bustard, when he suddenly finds himself within range of a pair of choke-bore barrels—so near that one can see his eye! How he ploughs through the air with redoubled efforts of those enormous wings, and hopes by putting on the pace to escape from danger.

It is when only *one* man and his driver are after bustard that the cream of this sport is enjoyed. The work then resembles deer-stalking, for the sportsman must necessarily creep up *very close* to his game in order to have any fair chance of a shot. Unless he has wormed his way to within 150 yards before the birds are raised, the odds are long against success. Gratifying indeed is the triumph when, after many efforts, and as many disappointments, one at length outmatches them, and secures a heavy bag by a single right-and-left.

By way of illustration, we give, in the next chapter, descriptions of bustard-shooting, (1) driving with a party in the ordinary way, and (2) Stalking and driving to a single gun.

Such, roughly described, are the two chief recognized systems of shooting the Great Bustard: *i.e.*, *driving*, which can be practised at any period of autumn, winter, or early spring, but which is most effective in March, when the growing crops afford sufficient "blind"; and shooting from the cart, which is only available during, or just after, harvest.

There remains, however, another method by which this game may be brought to bag—one which we may claim to have ourselves invented and brought to some degree of perfection—namely:

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Bustard-shooting single-handed.

At one period of the year (about May), just before the corn comes into ear, and when the male bustards are banded together, they are much more accessible, the corn being high all around them, and the guns more easily concealed. But the objections from a farmer's point of view are obvious, and we have rarely followed them under these conditions, though it is a favourite period with Spanish sportsmen.

We have frequently been asked by the country people to try our hands at their ambuscades by the wells (above described), and often caused surprise by declining to kill bustards in this way. It was, in fact, because we did not enjoy any of the means in vogue with the natives, that we resolved to try what could be done single-handed; and by sticking to it and hard work, have since accounted for many a fine *barbon*, and enjoyed many an hour's exciting sport with others not brought to bag, and which probably still roam over the Andalucian *vegas* to give fine sport another day.

On foot nothing could be done single-handed, but by the aid and co-operation of a steady old pony, success was found to be possible. As soon as the country is cleared of corn (about July or August), bustard pass the mid-day hours sheltering from the sun in any patch of high thistles or palmetto that may grow on the bare lands or stubbles. We have also found them, during mid-summer, under olive-trees, but never in any cover or spot where they could not command all the space for many gunshots around. Having been disturbed in their siesta—generally about a couple of hundred yards before the horseman reaches them—the birds stand up, shake the dust from their feathers, and are all attention to see that the intruder has no evil designs upon them. Ride directly towards them and they are off at once; but if approach be made cautiously and circuitously, the bustards, though suspicious and uneasy, do not rise but walk slowly away, for they are reluctant to take

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wing at this hot time. It is needless to add that the intense heat is also a severe test of endurance to the bustard-shooter. By keeping one's own figure and the pony's head as much averted as possible—advancing sidelong, crab-fashion, so to speak, and gradually circling inwards, one may, with patience, at length attain a deadly range,—seldom near, but still near enough to use the heavy AAA mould-shot with fatal effect, for the bustard, despite his bulk, is not a very hard or close-feathered bird, and falls to a blow that the grey goose would laugh at. When the nearest point is reached—and one learns by experience to judge by the demeanour of the game when they will permit no nearer approach—the opportune moment must be seized; the first barrel put in smartly on the ground, and more deliberate aim taken with the second as they rise.

The hotter the day, the nearer one can get. Much depends on the horse: if he does not stop *dead* the chance is lost, as the bustards rise directly on detecting a change in the movements of horse and man. With practice my pony became very clever, and came to know as well as his rider what was going on, so that after a time, we could rely on getting three or four shots a day and seldom returned without one bustard, frequently two or three. During one year (his best) the writer bagged sixty-two bustards to his own gun.

We make it a rule to accept no shot at any very risky distance, finding that, if not scared, the birds do not fly so far, and are more accessible on a second approach. Sometimes there occur lucky spots where, as one is slowly drawing round on them, the bustards walk over the crest of a ridge, and disappear. This is a chance not to be lost—slip from the saddle, run straight to the ridge, and surprise them, as they descend the reverse slope, with a couple of barrels ere they have time to realize the danger. Dips and hills, as before remarked, are not frequent on the haunts of bustards, but we have chanced on such localities more than once. Upon one occasion we bagged a brace of the largest *barbones* we ever saw by such a piece of good luck.

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A blazing sun is a great assistance, making the birds lazy and disinclined to exert themselves. As an instance of this we remember being after bustard one day in September—an intensely hot day even for Spain, and with a fiery sun beating down on the quivering plains. Though well protected by a thick felt helmet and wearing the lightest of light summer clothes, the heat was almost more than one could endure. We had unsuccessfully ridden over some thousands of acres of stubble and waste—it was on the historic plains of Guadalete where Roderic and the Arabs fought—when at length we were gratified by observing three bustards walk out of a cluster of thistles. After twice circling round them, we saw that at eighty or ninety yards' distance, they would stand it no longer: so turning in the saddle, gave them both barrels, but without effect, as they sailed away about a mile and settled. On a second approach, as they rose at 200 yards, it looked as though they were impracticable, but doubting if there were other birds in that neighbourhood, we kept on, and followed them in this second flight, which this time was shorter. Again they rose wild—wilder than ever, at fully 300 yards. They came down upon a patch of the barley-stubbled plain where we were able to mark their position to a nicety, for they pitched close to a *sombrajo*, or sun-shade for cattle (a thatch of palmetto spread on aloe-poles). On approaching the place, and not seeing the bustards afoot, we concluded they were resting after their repeated flights; but having reached almost the exact spot, we could still see nothing of them. This was perplexing. We knew they could not have risen, for our eyes had never left the spot where they had settled. What could have become of them? . . . . All at once we saw them, squatting flat within thirty yards of us, each bird pressed close down with his neck stretched along the ground. All trouble was now rewarded. It was not a chance to be risked by shooting from the saddle: and as we slid to the ground, gun cocked, and facing the birds, we felt it was the best double rise at big bustards that ever man had. As we touched the ground, they rose: one fell dead at forty yards, a second, wheeling back, showed too

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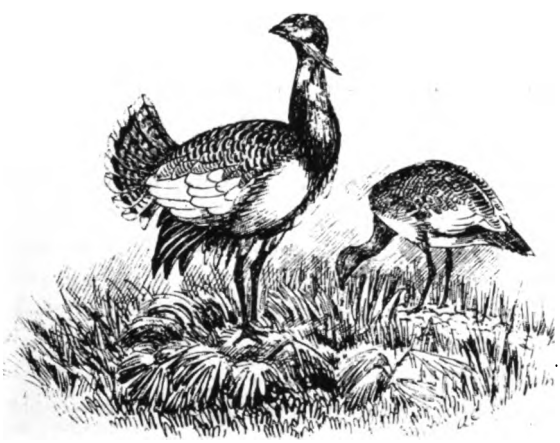
much of his white breast to be let off; the third flew far beyond view, and the only regret, for a moment, was that there were no treble-barrelled breech-loaders. Half an hour later we fell in with a band of young bustards, which allowed us to approach near enough to drop one; so that evening the old pony had a good load to carry home.



GREAT BUSTARDS—AN APRIL DAWN.

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CHAPTER IV.

BIG DAYS WITH BUSTARD.

I.—Jedilla.

The two following examples of fortunate days will serve to illustrate the system of bustard-shooting as practised on the corn-lands of Southern Spain, and convey some idea of the haunts and habits of this noble game-bird, in a region where they still remain abundant.

The rendezvous was at the Cortijo de Jedilla, a farm lying some twelve miles away, and the hour fixed was nine o'clock on an April morning. This, along a road that resembled the remains of an earthquake, necessitated an early start. For near three hours we rattled and jolted along in the roomy brake, that lurched at times like a cross-channel steamer, to the merry-jingling bells of a four-in-hand mule-team.

At the hour appointed our ponies and people stood around the broad-arched entrance of the cortijo, all under the direction of old Blas, the keen-eyed mountaineer, equally at home on rugged sierra, or bestriding bare-backed his restive colt, and intimately acquainted with every inch of the wide country around. Blas had left home long before daybreak on that lovely spring morning, and after covering the four leagues across the plains at a hand-gallop, had already—like swift Camilla—scoured all the cultivated lands around the cortijo, in search of the big birds while yet they were busy seeking their matutinal feed. He received us with the gratifying intelligence that he had marked *tres bandadas*—three packs of bustard. In a few minutes we were mounted, the guns slung in the *fundas*, and away.

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Blas led the file of horsemen towards the nearest band. We were a party of four, with a contingent of six mounted hands under Blas' directions in the ticklish work of driving. Presently the bustards are descried, their lavender heads and lighter necks visible, through the glasses, above the *biznagas* (visnaya of Linnæus) on a hillside some 1,000 yards away.

Their position, on a hill of so gentle a slope as to command all the plain around, was most difficult to surround; however, as a forlorn hope, and rather with the object of moving them to more favourable ground, we rode slowly past them on the north, at about 300 yards, the birds perking their heads and taking the most lively interest in the string of horsemen. When the nature of the land afforded a cover from the birds' view, we rode round to the southern side, but always at too great a distance to promise anything like a fair chance of getting the birds over us.* Our four guns, however, now spread out along the slope, covering among them some quarter-mile of possible flight. The men, riding round to the northern side again, opened out in line, and slowly came in towards the common centre. At first the pack came straight for the guns; but the leader, flying higher than the rest, caught sight of a foe—of No. 1 gun lying full length on the soil—swerved, and took with him the whole pack, out of shot on the extreme right. The latter fact our inexperienced friend in that quarter did not comprehend, for he let drive a couple of quick and useless barrels. Worse than useless! for, as we watched the splendid birds streaming away into space across the valleys of spring corn, we knew that our chance at that *bandada* was gone—at least for the day.

* The grand secret of success in this sport (as elsewhere remarked) is to place the guns *close up* to the game. The means by which the primary object is attained can hardly be set down on paper—nothing but practice, quick and good judgment, and a sportsman's instinct will effect it. In more than one instance we have found a deadly line ambushed within 150 yards of the most watchful bustards, and on ground where, to a novice, the feat would certainly be set down as impossible.

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The second band required a good deal of finding: although Blas was confident he had correctly localized them, we could descry no bustards anywhere in that neighbourhood. At length one of our scouts brought us good news; the birds had walked more than a mile from where Blas had seen them in the early morning. We now waited for him to reconnoitre, and he soon reported that they were basking in the sun amidst a sea of shooting barley—a fact we shortly verified with our field-glasses. Not only were they so favourably placed for a stalk that we would be able to "horseshoe" the four guns behind them at almost certain distance, but the drivers (by a long detour) would also get well in at the front of their position unseen. The two centre guns were placed in the valley at the foot of the green slope, while the two flanking guns were enabled, by the favouring ground, to creep well up the hillside—a disposition which would leave the birds wholly enclosed at their first flight. The central posts had also the advantage of a rank growth of weeds along the hollow, which effectually concealed them from view. It was a short affair. The writer (left flank) soon heard the whirr of heavy wings: the game passed between him and the opposite flanking gun, out of shot of either, but "entering" beautifully to the centre. Both guns rose to watch the tableau. Straight as a line passed forward the huge *barbones*—some five-and-twenty of them, the resplendent plumage of rich orange and contrasting black and white set off against the green background; their great swollen necks appeared almost disproportionately heavy, even for those broad pinions and (seemingly) leisurely flight. But bustards, like all heavy game, travel vastly quicker than appears to be the case, as the sequel proved.

Now they are on the very fringe of the darker green of the hollow; our centre guns have them at their mercy. Don't they see them? Yes; two figures rise from the rank weeds, and flashing barrels enfilade the flock. One, two, three, four reports ring out; but .... not a bird comes down, the frightened monsters spread asunder, winging a quicker flight in all directions. One huge *barbudo* behind the rest

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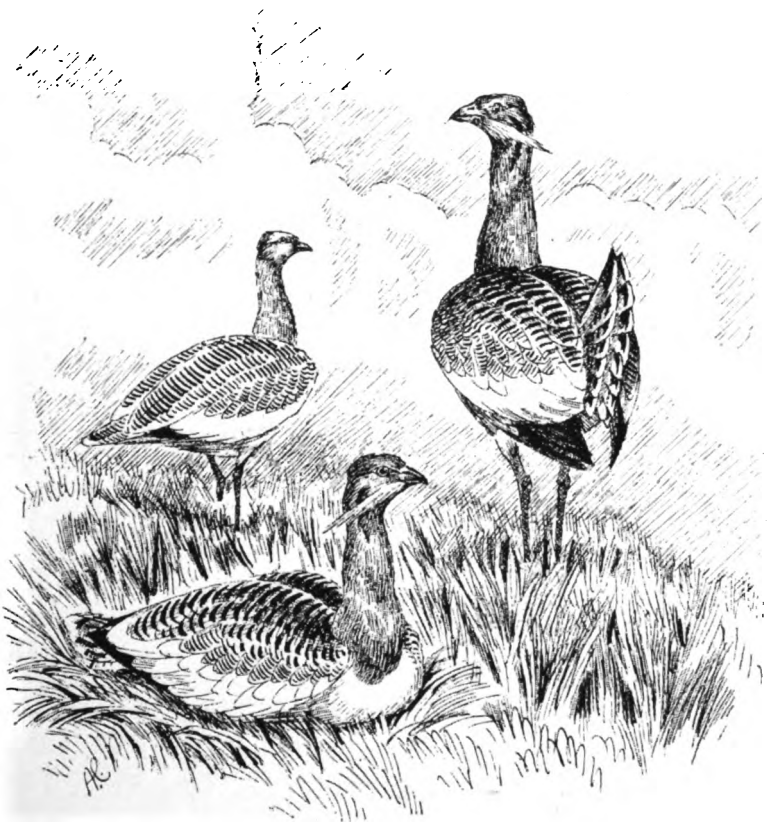

Plate IX. Page 48.

GREAT BUSTARDS -AMONG THE SPRING CORN.

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wheels back and almost gives us a chance as he takes the hill in reverse; but he sees the danger and passes to the right, swerving in his course too near our *vis-à-vis*, and before we hear the report we can see the ponderous mass of 30lbs. of bustard collapse. He is struck well forward, in head and neck, and pitches heavily earthwards, splitting his broad chest as it rebounds from the unyielding soil. We had—and that by sheer chance—a single head to show for this carefully-planned drive.

Our young friends in the valley were sad indeed, but over such things let us draw the veil. The drivers, too, had witnessed their failure. It may be safer rather to leave their feelings to the sympathetic reader to imagine than to describe. Old Blas declared they had "llenado el ojo de carne"—that the huge bulk of the birds had concealed from over-anxious eyes the rapidity of their flight. After lunch what had appeared a catastrophe became a jest.

An unsuccessful manœuvre followed, and we had to ride afar to seek fresh *bandadas*. After traversing leagues of corn-land—at this season as lonely as an African desert,—we descried a considerable pack, and again luck favoured us as to site. An *arroyo*, or stream, ran along the valley below—one of those small rapid currents that, in winter, tear deep and narrow gulleys, and in the summer become quite dry, save in a few of the deeper pools or favoured corners which resist the heat and afford nesting homes for the mallard and drinking resorts for the bustard. Now, there was water all along, and tall reeds and canes grew several feet in height. Could we place the guns along this ditch the drive was secure. The question was, Would the birds allow a mounted group to pass so near? We tried and succeeded. Witness's luck placed him in a cane-brake, whence he could watch every movement of the bustards at leisure. On rising, the pack bore straight to the gun on the left. Luckily (for us), this "point-gun," in his undue anxiety, showed too soon—before the birds had come well in. The pack swung in our direction, right along the line, giving a chance to both centre guns (only

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one of which was taken advantage of), and then bore straight for the writer, well overhead, and not over 60 feet high—an *embarras de richesse*.

The first and second shots, with the 12-bore, stopped a pair of what appeared the biggest of the pack, coming in—right and left—and then, picking up a single 4-bore, there followed the further satisfaction of pulling down a third old male at very long range. These three superb birds weighed 93lbs.—a notable shot, probably without parallel in sporting annals.

Before night we found twice more, and each of the *batidas* added a bird to the bag, the result of the day's sport being seven noble *barbones*, or male bustard, now in the fullest glory of their splendid spring plumage.

Thus ended a successful day, on which Fortune had favoured us, on several occasions, in finding the game in accessible situations. Such good luck does not always, nor even often, await the bustard-shooter; and even when it does, there still remains the real *crux*—the quick intuition of the requisite strategical movements and their successful execution.

II.—Santo Domingo. An Idyl.

The chimes of San Miguel were already ringing out the summons to even-song. Graceful figures in dark lace and mantillas hurried across the palm-shaded Plaza, as two Ingléses (*sus servidores de ustedes*) rode out of the city on an April afternoon.

It was rather for a ride than with any special sporting object in view that we set out. Yet, as is always the case in Spain, the guns were slung behind the saddle, and we remembered that, only a few days before, one of us had encountered a band of thirteen bustards—a dozen of which should still be basking on the green corn-lands of Santo Domingo, within a league of the *octroi* boundary.

The binoculars, however, swept the swelling grounds without disclosing any occupants more important than a

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group of grey cranes and a pair of partridges indulging in vernal flirtations, careless of a kite which hovered hard by.

Beyond the corn-land lay undulated *manchones*, or

THE BUSTARD-SHOOTER—TRIUMPH!

fallows, clothed with a short growth of grass and thistles, and here on the summit of a flat-crowned knoll, a mile away, we descried a band of eight bustards. Hardly could a more unfavourable spot be selected. Their sentries

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commanded every visible approach, and we advanced in Indian file to reconnoitre, with the conviction that any operation must be in the nature of a forlorn hope. But a skill and rapid perception of the least advantage, worthy of a field-marshal, were at work, directed against the hapless eight. Riding circuitously around the game, we had approached as near as prudence allowed—some 300 yards, when an almost imperceptible depression served for a few moments to screen us from their view. Hardly had the last head sunk below the sky-line than one of the two guns rolled out of the saddle, passing the reins to his companion, who, in ten more yards, had reappeared to the already suspicious bustards. By the invaluable aid of a tiny furrow, worn by the winter's rains, but barely a foot in depth, No. 1 managed to worm a serpentine progression to the shoulder of the hill,—a point some 100 yards up the gentle slope, and barely twice that distance from the game,—while No. 2, slowly encircling the birds at 200 yards radius, gradually contracting and in full view, gained the reverse of the hill. Twice the big sentry had given the warning to "be ready"; as often the hunter widened his course till suspicion was allayed. Critical moments these, when success or failure depend upon a thread: upon instant diagnosis of what is passing in one's opponent's mind, divining, so to speak, his intentions before he has actually perfected them, or even decided himself.

So perfect in this encounter was the strategy—so complete the ascendency of mind over instinct—and the keenest instinct of all, that of self-preservation—that in due time the intervening space had been diminished, yard by yard, almost to the fatal range. Presently the still hesitating birds are little more than one hundred yards away—the great sentinel some five yards nearer. Now: mark well every movement of his—there is the signal at last: his stately head is lowered—slowly lowered some six inches while he still watches intently. Now he takes a rapid step forward—he is going. But hardly have the huge wings unfolded than the rider has sprung to his feet, and a couple of charges of "treble A" crash together into that broad back

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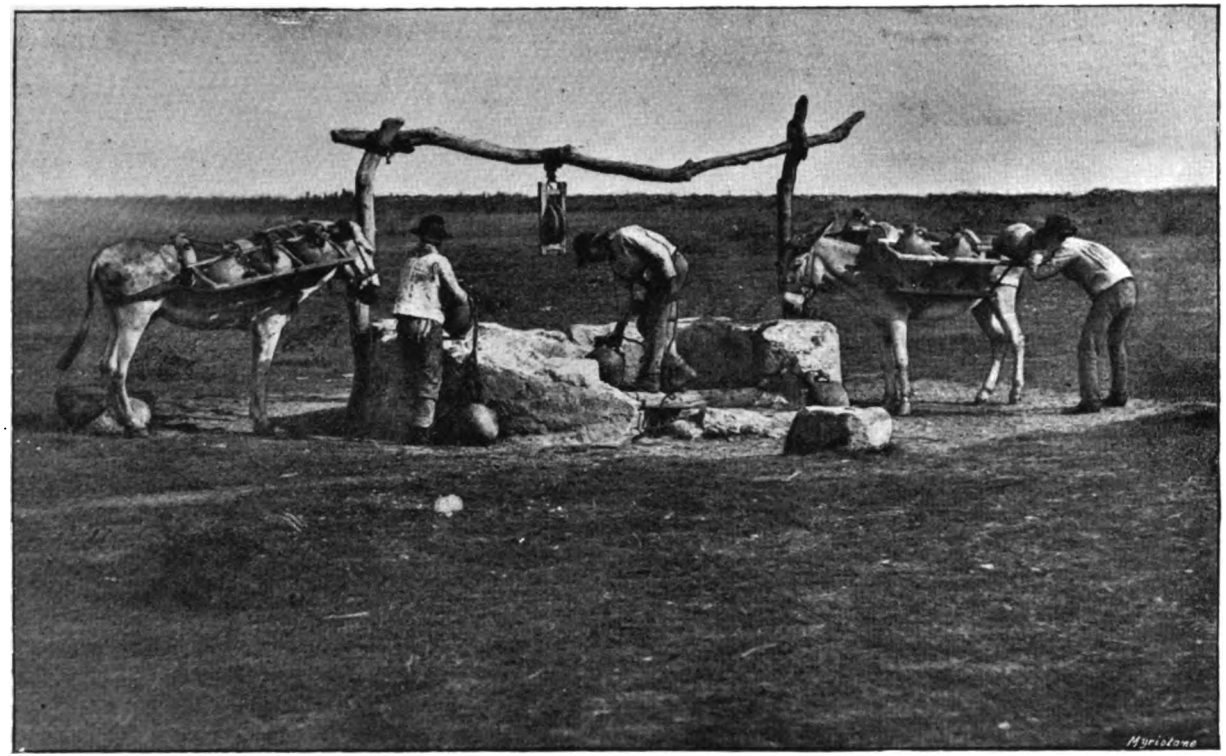

Plate X. ANCIENT DRAW-WELL ON THE PLAINS. Page 52.

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and lowered neck. The distance is great—near 100 yards —but mould-shot and cold-drawn steel barrels have done it before, and will do it again : back to earth, which he had barely quitted, returns the stricken monarch of the plain, blood staining his snowy breast, and one great pinion hanging useless by his side.

The seven survivors wing away straight towards the point where the other gun lies hidden in the dry drain-head. Mark! Now the leading *barbon* checks his flight as he sees the flash of barrels beneath : but it is all too late, and down he, too, comes with a mighty crash, to earth. A third, offering only a "stern shot," continues a laboured flight, his pinion-feathers sticking out at sixes and sevens, and soon pitches on the verge of a marshy hollow where storks are dotted about in search of frogs. It was an awkward place, and necessitated moving him again : indeed, this bird gave no small trouble to secure. The sun had already set, and night drew on apace, ere the final shot, ringing out amidst gathering gloom, told that he, too, had been added to the spoils of that glorious afternoon.

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CHAPTER V.

TAUROMACHIA,

The Fighting Bull of Spain.

NOTES ON HIS HISTORY: HIS BREEDS AND REARING: AND HIS LIFE UP TO THE "ENCIERRO,"—*i.e.*, THE EVE OF HIS DEATH.

We trust the reader may not fear that he is about to suffer once more the infliction of the oft-described Spanish bull-fight. We have no intention so far to abuse his patience. The subject is exhausted: has been dilated upon by almost every visitor to this country, though nearly always with inaccuracy and imperfect knowledge.

It is customary for such writers to condemn the bull-fight* *in toto* on account of its cruelty: to denounce it without reservation, as a barbarous and brutal exhibition and nothing more. The cruelty is undeniable, and much to be deprecated; the more so as this element could, to a large extent, be eliminated. But, despite the fate of sacrificed horses, there are elements in the Spanish bull-fight that the British race are accustomed to hold in esteem —the qualities of pluck, nerve, and coolness in face of danger. To attack in single combat, on foot, and with no

* The expression "Bull-fight" is a very inadequate interpretation of the Spanish *Corrida*, or *Fiesta de Toros*, even in its modern form, and conveys no idea of the magnificent spectacular displays of the middle ages. Then, the national heroic life was but reflected in the arena, in scenes embellished with all the stately accessories and colouring dear to semi-Oriental minds. The mimic pageantry of to-day is but a relic of former grandeur.

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weapon but the sword, a powerful and ferocious animal, means taking one's life in one's hand, and relying for safety and final triumph on cool intrepid pluck, on a marvellous activity and truth of hand, eye, and limb, and on a nerve which not the peril even of the supreme moment can disturb.

There are doubtless balanced minds which, while in no way ignoring or exculpating its cruelties, can yet recognize in the *toréo* an unrivalled exhibition of human skill, nerve, and power, and can distinguish between the good and the bad among its heterogeneous constituents.

The bull-fight, as a spectacle, has often been described: but no English writers have attempted to trace its origin and history; to explain its firm-seated hold on the affections of the Spanish people, and to show how their keen zest for the national sport goes back to the days of chivalry. Nor has anything been written of the agricultural, or pastoral side of the question, and of the picturesque scenes amidst which the earlier stages of the drama are enacted on broad Iberian plain and prairie: of the feats of horsemanship and "derring do" at the *tentaderos*, or trials, and later at the *encierro* on that hot summer morning when the gallant *toro bravo* is lured for ever from his native pastures, and led by traitor kin within the fatal enclosure of the arena.

The custom of the toréo, if not the art, is so ancient, its origin so lost in the mists of time, that it is difficult to fix the precise period at which bull-fighting was first practised. There is written evidence to show that encounters between men and bulls were not infrequent at the time of the Arab invasion in the eighth century, and it may be accepted that it was this eastern race that gave the diversion its first popularity.* It is proved beyond doubt that at the Moorish *fêtes* encounters with bulls were one of the chief sports, and when, centuries later, the Arab

* Spanish writers, however, jealous for the national origin of the sport, insist that the "Fiestas de Toros" were born in Spain, that there alone have they increased and flourished, and that in Spain will they continue while time lasts.

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was finally driven from Spanish soil, they left behind them their passion for these conflicts, as they left many of their industries and many words of their language. Wherever the expelled Arabs may now be, it is at least certain that the bull-fight has taken root in no other land outside of Spain.* During the interludes of war, when the opposing forces of Moor and Christian made peace for a while, the inauguration of a truce was celebrated by a bull-fight, whereat knights of both sides rivalled each other in the tauromachian fray. The heroic Cid, el Campeador (*obiit*, A.D. 1098) signalized the contests of the eleventh century, himself taking the chief part. His graceful horsemanship in the arena was as favourite a theme for song and sonnet as even his redoubtable deeds in the field. The ever-popular ballad of *Don Rodrigo de Bivar* is still heard in the mountain villages.

So frequent and of such importance had these *fiestas* become that, after the termination of Moorish dominion, Queen Isabel I. of Castile prohibited them by edict in all her kingdoms: but the edict proved waste paper. Alarmed by witnessing a *corrida* at which human blood was shed, her Catholic majesty made strenuous efforts to put down bull-fighting throughout the land: but the national taste was too deeply implanted in the breasts of a warlike and powerful nobility, whom she was too prudent to offend. In a letter to her Father Confessor in 1493, she declares her intention never again to witness a *corrida*, and adds:—"Y no digo defenderlos (esto es prohibirlos) porque esto no era para mi á solas"—which is to say, that her will, which could accomplish the expulsion of the Moor and the Jew, was powerless to uproot the bull-fight.

* On this point, Sanchez de Nieva writes ("El Toréo," published at Madrid, 1879):—"The Arabs were much given to bull-fighting, and highly skilled in the *lidia*, whether mounted or on foot. It must, however, be borne in mind that these encounters took place in Spain, and that the so-called Arabs were in reality Spaniards—the Moorish domination having then lasted for seven centuries. It may be stated, without fear of error, that nearly all the inhabitants of this country, after the first two centuries, were, though born in Spain, Arabs in origin."

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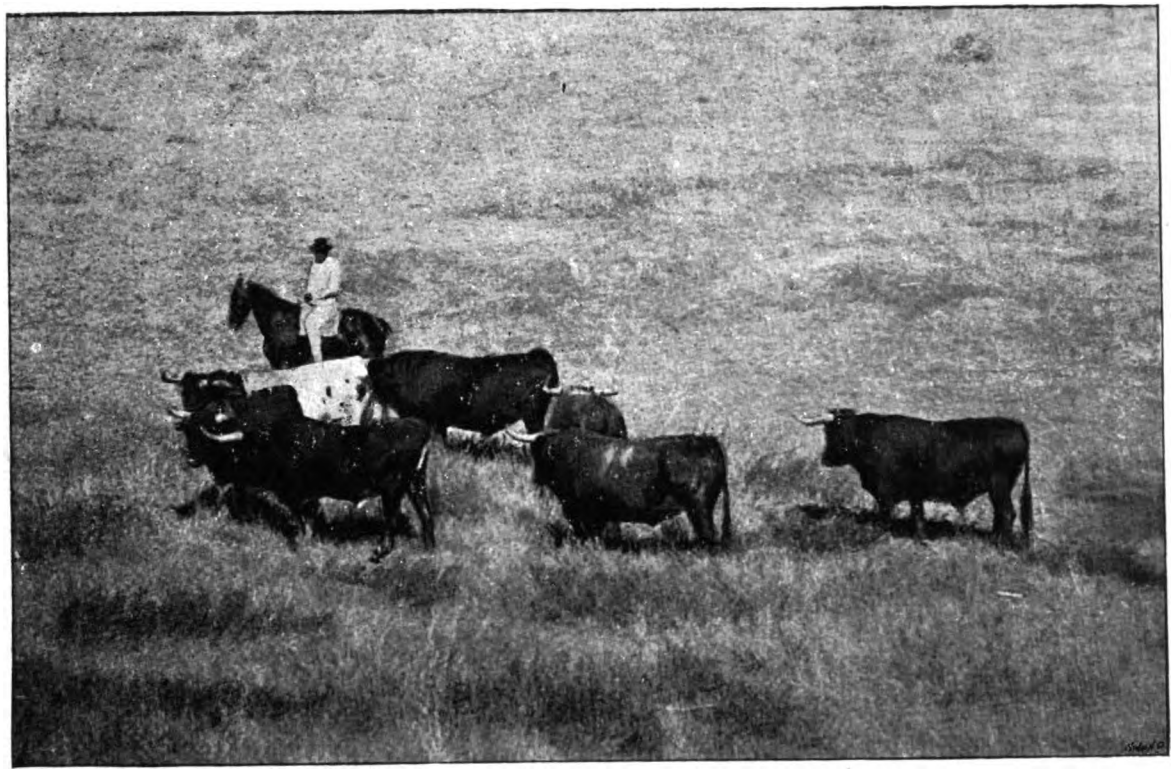

Plate XI. BULLS ON THE PLAINS. Page 57.

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The power of the papacy was alike invoked in vain. In 1567 a papal bull issued by Pius V. prohibited all Catholic princes, under pain of excommunication, from permitting *corridas* in their dominions; a similar punishment for all priests who attended them, and Christian burial was denied to all who fell in the arena. Not even these terrible measures availed, and succeeding Pontiffs were fain to relax the severity of the *bulas* of their predecessors, since each successive prohibition was met by the magnates of the land arranging new *corridas*. At length the time arrived when masters of theology at Salamanca ruled that clerics of a certain rank might licitly attend these spectacles.

Isabel's grandson, Charles I., killed with his own hand a bull in the city of Valladolid, during the festivities held to celebrate the birth of his eldest son, afterwards Philip II.; and, later, during the reigns of the House of Austria, to face a bull with bravery and skill, and to use a dexterous lance, was the pride of every Spanish noble.

It was a gay and imposing scene in those days when the *lidia*, or tournament, took place—held in the largest open square of the town, around which were erected the graded platforms whence *Damas* and *Caballeros*, in all the bravery of mediæval toilet and costume, watched the performance.

The people were permitted only a servile share in these aristocratic *fiestas*. The knight, mounted on fiery Arab steed, was armed only with the *rejon*, or short sharp lance of those days, five feet in length, and held at its extreme end. At a given signal he sallied forth to meet the bull, which, infuriated by sight of horse and rider, dashed from his trammels and went straight to the charge. The first blow of his horns, if driven home, meant death: and the horseman's art lay in avoiding the impact by a well-timed move to the left: at the same moment, by an adroit counter-move, empaling with his lance the lower neck: and so delivering the thrust as to clear himself and horse from the rebound of the bull. This manœuvre required dexterity, coolness, and strength of arm: and when successful was graceful-in the highest degree, eliciting, as the rider curvetted away from his worsted and enraged

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antagonist, the loudest applause, and dark-eyed *Damas*, with flashing glances of pride and sympathy, would throw flowers to the valiant Paladin.

> "The ladies' hearts began to melt,
> Subdued by blows their lovers felt;
> So Spanish heroes with their lances
> At once wound bulls and ladies' fancies."

When the bull fell dead from a single thrust enthusiasm knew no bounds: to administer this fatal stroke in masterly style was the ambition of the flower of Spanish youth.

If dismounted, the knight, by established rule, must face the bull on foot, sword in hand. He was allowed the assistance of his slaves or servants, who, at the risk of their lives, "played" the brute till an opportunity was afforded for a death-thrust from their master's sword. It is in this phase of the fight that we trace the origin of several of the *suertes* which are practised in the modern Corrida de Toros.*

With the accession of the Bourbons to the Spanish throne came a change. These rude encounters were little in harmony with the elegance and effeminacy of the French court. So coldly were they regarded that, by slow degrees, the Spanish nobility withdrew themselves from the arena. Then, as Gallic manners and customs prevailed and extended beyond court circles till adulation of the French monarch became a creed, the Spanish gentry abandoned their ancient sport.

But the hold of the national pastime on the Moro-hispanic race was too firm-set to be swept away by alien influence, however strong: and when thus abandoned by the patricians, by the hidalgos and grandees of Spain, the

* Attempts were made by other countries to imitate the Spanish spectacle. Italy, in 1332, celebrated a tauromachian festival which has left a sad record on the page of history. No fewer than nineteen Roman gentlemen, and many of lower rank, perished on the horns of the bulls. After this tragic event bull-fights were prohibited in Italy, though for a time revived by the Spanish in that country after their conquest of Flanders and the Low Countries.

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sport of bull-fighting was taken up by the Spanish people. It was at this period (towards the end of the eighteenth century) that the Corridas de Toros, as now practised (with slight variations), were established and organized. Bull-rings and paid *matadores* took the place of the city square and the knight. Many additions to the original corridas were inaugurated, and the sport assumed more diversified and even more dangerous forms.

The first professional matadors were the brothers Juan and Pedro Palomo, followed by the celebrated names of Martinez Billon (el Africano), Francisco Romero and his son Juan, José Delgado Candido (better known as Pepe Hillo), who died in the Plaza of Port St. Mary on the 24th June, 1771, and, later on, Rodriguez Castellares, Geronimo Candido, son of José (Pepe Hillo), who fell mortally wounded at Madrid, 11th May, 1802, and many more of high tauromachian fame.*

Most of the Plazas de Toros, or bull-rings, of the first class, were erected at this period—that at Madrid in 1741, at Seville, 1763, at Aranjuez, 1796, Saragoza, 1764, Puerto S^{ta}. Maria, 1771, Ronda, 1785, and Jerez de la Frontera, 1798.

The master-hand who directed and perfected this re-organization, on popular lines, of the national *fiesta*, after the Bourbon influence had alienated the aristocracy from their ancient diversion, was PEPE HILLO: who established the rules and etiquette and drew up the tauromachian code of honour, written and unwritten, which, in the main, prevails at the present day. None more fully recognize the ability and prowess of this 'gran maestro' of old than the famous matadors who are to-day the highest living exponents of tauromachian art—men such as Frascuelo, Lagartijo and Mazzantini, whose names are household words from the Bidasoa to the Mediterranean.

Andalucia has always been, and still remains, the province where the love of the bull and all that pertains to him is most keenly cherished, and where the modern bull-

* De Bedoya's "Historia del Toréo" (Madrid, 1850) gives Francisco de Romero as the first professional *lidiador* of the modern epoch.

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fight may to-day be seen in its highest perfection and development. It provides both the best bull-fighters and most valued strains of the fighting bull. It may be added that the Andalucian nobility were the last of their order to discontinue their historic pursuit: and when, during the darker days of this sport, the Royal order of the Maestranza de Sevilla was created by Philip V., it was conceded in the statutes that members of the order could hold two corridas with the long lance annually outside the city walls. Three gentlemen subsequently received titles of exalted nobility of this order in respect of brilliant performances with the lance.

Though Andalucia is the stronghold both of the Toro and of the Toreador—the scene of the popular bull-fighting opera of *Carmen* is appropriately laid at Seville—yet the oldest of all the Spanish herds is pastured in the rough country around Valladolid, in Old Castile. This caste has been in existence since the fifteenth century: from it the old nobility selected their bulls, and it furnished the kingly contests of Philip and Charles III. This herd is known as *El raso del Portillo*, and, though entitled to pre-eminence in respect of antiquity, yet several of the more modern breeders command higher prices. The ever-increasing demand has driven the cost of a "warrantable" five-year-old bull up to £70 or £80. To succeed in uniting the various qualities required in an animal of this value, great judgment in breeding and a considerable outlay are necessary.

At the age of one year, the young bulls are separated from the heifers, each animal branded on the side with the insignia of its herd, and on the neck with its number therein, and turned out loose on the plains to graze with its companions of similar age and sex. When the youngsters have passed another year, their critical time has arrived, and their first trials for mettle and fighting qualities take place. The brave are set aside for the Plaza: the—comparatively—docile destroyed, at least by scrupulous breeders; while from the chosen lot a further selection is made of the sires for perpetuating the breed. From the

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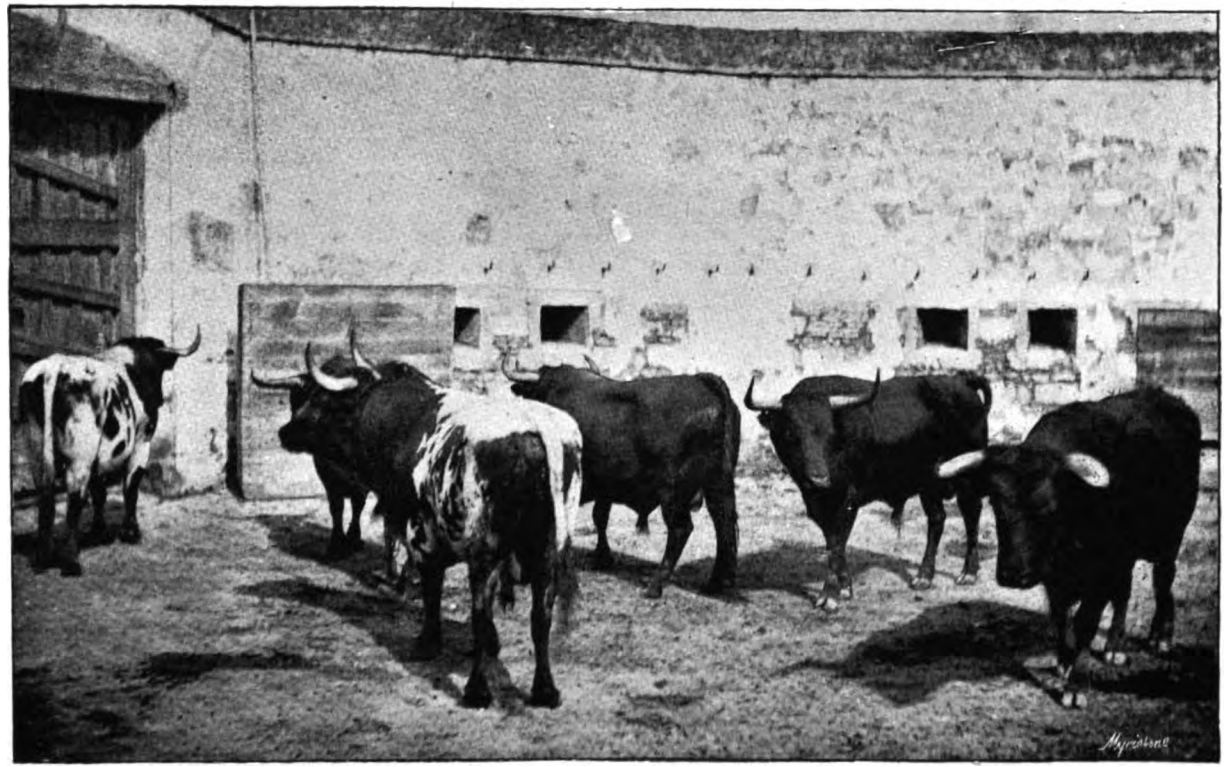

Plate XII. THE MORN OF THE FIGHT-BULLS IN THE TORIL. (Miura's Breed.) Page 61.

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moment the fighting bulls are selected, they are treated with the utmost care, and for two years more roam at liberty over the richest pasturage of the wide unfrequented prairies. At four years old they are moved into the *cerrados*, or enclosures—fields of great extent, surrounded by a wooden stockade and double ditch. The *cerrado* they never leave till bound for the Plaza. Should pasture fail through drought or deluge, they are fed on tares, vetch, and maize—even with wheat. Their *début* in public must be made in the highest possible condition. The bulls should be, at the time, not less than five nor more than seven years old.

While thus grazing at large on the open plain, the bulls are in charge of herdsmen over whom is the official known in Castile as *mayoral*, in Andalucia as *conocedor*, assisted by his *ayudante*. These two spend their lives in the saddle, each carrying the long "garrocha," or lance, as a defensive weapon. The herdsmen go on foot, each armed with a sling, in the use of which they are adepts.

To return to the two-year-old point in the bull's life—that is, as we have stated, the critical stage in his existence, for then his "trial" takes place.

It is also an important period for the owner, for upon the proportion of good-mettled, "warrantable" beasts depends the profit and reputation of the herd. It is customary for the owner and his friends to be present at these *tentaderos* or trials: and a bright and picturesque scene they afford, thoroughly typical of untrodden Andalucia, and of the buoyant, careless exuberance and dare-devil spirit of her people.

Nowhere can the exciting scenes of the *tentadero* be witnessed to greater advantage than on the wide level pastures which extend from Seville to the Bay of Cadiz. Here, far out on the spreading "vegas," carpeted with rich profusion of wild flowers and pasturage, where the canicular sun flashes yet more light and fire into the fiery veins of the Andaluz—here occurs the first scene in the drama of the *Toréo*. For centuries these flowery plains have been the scene of countless *tentaderos*, where the "majos,"—

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young bloods,—generation after generation, revel in feats of skill, courage, and horsemanship. Both good riding and staying power are often called into requisition by those taking an active part in the operations.

The night before the trials take place, the usually quiet and sequestered Estancia (or rancho) is a scene of unwonted revelry. The owners of the herd and many friends—all *aficionados* of the sport—have come up from the distant town to take part in the selection of the morrow—as this work commences at early dawn, the night must be spent on the spot. The rude walls of the rancho resound with boisterous hilarity, dance and song succeed each other, to the vigorous notes of the guitar—sleep is not to be thought of, good humour, gaiety, and no small admixture of practical joking pass away the night, and by the first of the daylight all are in the saddle. The two-year-old-bulls have previously been herded upon a part of the estate which affords the best level ground for smart manœuvre and fast riding, and here the duty of keeping the impetuous beasts together—no easy task—is allotted to skilled herdsmen armed with long *garrochas*—lances of some four yards in length, with short steel tips. As just mentioned, it is no easy work to keep the young bulls together, for they are anxious to break away and dart off to join their friends in the distance. When all is ready the herdsmen allow one bull to escape across the flat open country, pursued by two horsemen who are awaiting the moment, *garrocha* in hand. These men rival each other to place the first lance and to turn the bull over. This is effected by planting a blunt-tipped *garrocha* on the bull's *off-flank*, near the tail, when a powerful thrust, given at full speed, overthrows him: but obviously the feat requires a good eye, a firm seat, and a strong arm. Immediately the bull is over, with his four feet in the air, another horseman, who has ridden close behind, comes up. He is armed with a more pointed lance, and is called *el tentador*. On rising, the bull finds this man between him and his companions in the *rodéo*, to whom he would now fain return. He immediately charges the obstacle,

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receiving on his shoulder the *garrocha* point; thrown back for a moment, and smarting under this first check to his hitherto unthwarted will, he returns to the charge with redoubled fury, but only to find the horse protected as before: the pluckier spirits will make a third or a fourth attack, but those which freely charge *twice* are passed as fit for the ring.

Sometimes the young bull declines to charge the *tentador*, submitting quietly to his overthrow, and only desiring to escape. He does not get off without a second fall; but if, after this, he still refuses to charge, he is at once condemned—doomed to death, or at best a life of agricultural toil. A note is taken of each selected bull (its colour, size, and shape of horns, and general appearance); and each is entered in the herd-book, under a particular name—such as Espartero, Cardinillo, Linares, Flamenco, and the like. By these names they are known, and at the end publicly described in the flaming "posters" and advertisements of the *Corrida* at which they are to make their final appearance.

Nor is there anything modern in this individualizing of the champions of the arena. In the Moorish ballads ("The Bull-Fight of Gazul"), so happily translated by Lockhart, we find the "toro bravo" had his name in those days:—

"Now stops the drum; close, close they come; thrice meet, and thrice give back:
The white foam of Harpado lies on the charger's breast of black—
The white foam of the charger on Harpado's front of dun;—
Once more advance upon his lance—once more, thou fearless one!"

It often happens, when a bull is singled out from the *rodéo*, that he does not take to his heels as expected, but charges the nearest person, on foot or mounted, that he may see. Then look out for squalls! The danger must be averted, when it *is* averted, by skill and experience; but it seldom happens that one of these trial-days passes without broken bones or accidents of some kind or other. The men engaged in these operations have, of course, no shelter of any kind; but the Spanish herdsmen, when taken at

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disadvantage, are adepts in the use of their jackets, with which they give "passes" to the bull, who always follows the moving object. A smart fellow, when caught in the open, can thus keep a bull off him for several moments, giving time for the horsemen to come up to the rescue. Even then it is no unusual occurrence to see horsemen, horse and bull all rolling together on the turf in one common ruin. A bright-coloured scarf or mantle will always draw away the bull from his prostrate foe; otherwise there would soon be an end of *tentadores*, bull-branders, and bull-fighters too, for the matter of that.

Each animal in the herd is put through the tests we have described, the proportion selected varying according to the excellence and purity of the strain: and then, for three years longer, the selected bulls continue to lead a life of ease and abundance upon the smiling Andalucian *vega*.*

Skill in handling the *garrocha*, and the ability to turn over a running bull, are accomplishments in high esteem amongst Spanish youth. Names now famous in politics or diplomacy (Don Luis Albereda, for example, late Spanish Minister at St. James's, the Duke of San Lorenzo, and many more), are still mentioned in Andalucia as past experts in the records of this southern diversion—a fame analogous to that of our foremost steeple-chase riders at home.†

The *tentadero* at the present day affords opportunity for aristocratic gatherings, that recall the tauromachian tournaments of old. Even the Infantas of Spain enter into the spirit of the sport, and have been known themselves to wield the *garrocha* with good effect, as was, a few months ago, the case at a brilliant *fête champêtre* on the Sevillian *vegas*, when the Condesa de Paris and her

* The better-bred animals are always the more harmless, if not molested.

† The following are some of the best known *garrochistas* of recent years: Señores Don Antonio Miura, Don Faustino Morube, Don Miguel Garcia, Don Guillermo Ochoteco, Don José Silva, Don Fernando Concha, Don Agusto Adalid, Don Angel Zaldos, Don Manuel Sanchez-Mira, Marques de Bogaraya, Marques de Guadalest, Don Frederico Huesca, Marques de Castellones, &c.

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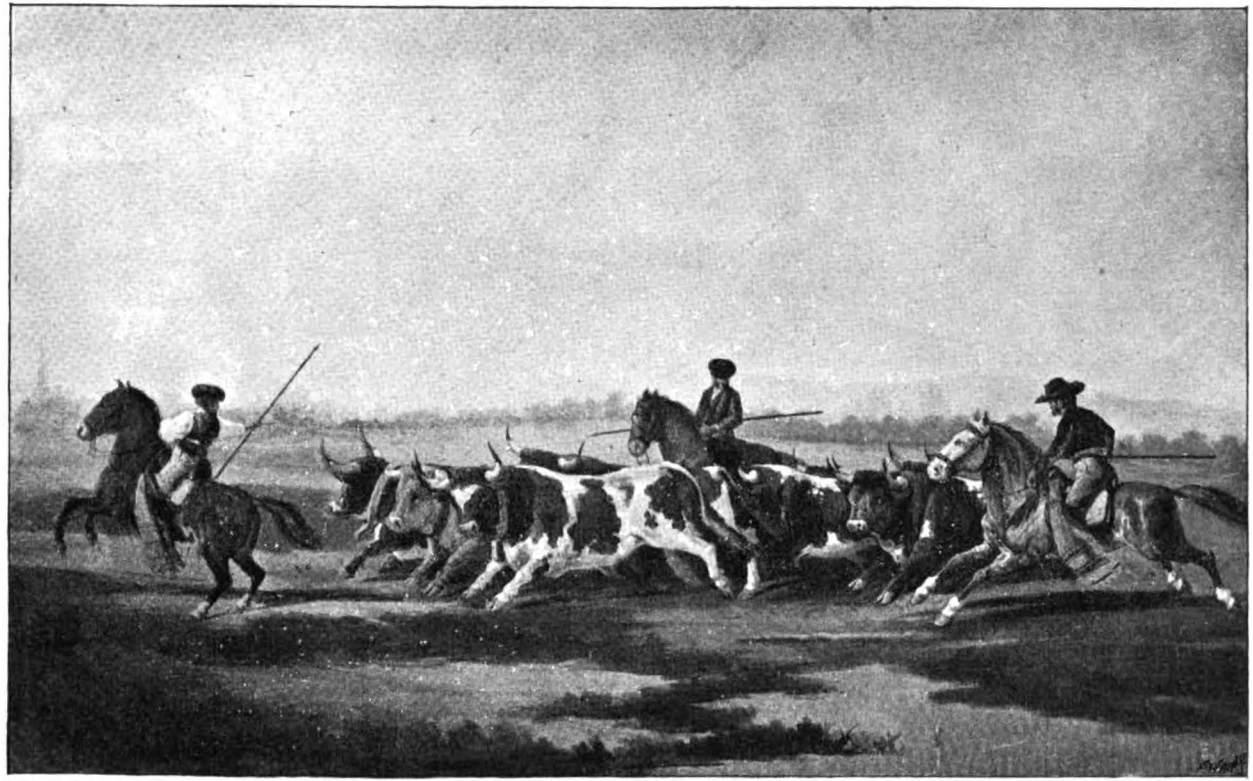

Plate XIII. THE *ENCIERRO.* Page 65.

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daughter, Princess Elena, each overthrew a sturdy two-year-old; the Infanta Eulalia riding "*á ancas*," or pillion-fashion, with an Andalucian nobleman, among the merriest of a merry party.

At length, however, the years spent in luxurious idleness on the silent plains must come to an end. One summer morning the brave herd find grazing in their midst some strange animals, which appear to make themselves extremely agreeable to the lordly champions, now in the zenith of magnificent strength and beauty. The strangers grazing with them are the *cabrestos* (or *cabestros*, in correct Castilian), the decoy-oxen sent out to fraternize for a few days with the fighting race, preparatory to the *encierro*, or operation of conveying the latter to the town where the corrida takes place. Each *cabestro* has a large cattle-bell, of the usual Spanish type, suspended round its neck, in order to accustom the wild herd to follow the lead of these base betrayers of the brave. Shortly the noble bulls will be lured in their company away from their native plains, through country paths and byeways, to the entrance of the fatal *toril*.

An animated spectacle it is on the eve of the *corrida*, when, amidst clouds of dust and clang of bells, the tame oxen and wild bulls are driven forward by galloping horsemen and levelled *garrochas*. The excited populace, already intoxicated with bull-fever and the anticipation of the coming corridas, lining the way to the Plaza, careless if in the enthusiasm for the morrow they risk some awkward rips to-day.

Once inside the lofty walls of the *toril*, it is easy to withdraw the treacherous *cabestros*, and one by one to tempt the bulls each into a small separate cell, the *chiquero*, the door of which will to-morrow fall before his eyes. Then, rushing upon the arena, he finds himself confronted and encircled by surging tiers of yelling humanity, while the crash of trumpets and glare of moving colours madden his brain. Then the gaudy horsemen, with menacing lances, recall his day of trial on the distant plain, horsemen now doubly hateful in their brilliant glittering tinsel.

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No wonder the noble brute rushes with magnificent fury to the charge.

What a spectacle is presented by the Plaza at this moment!—one without parallel in the modern world. The vast amphitheatre, crowded to the last seat in every row

A BULL-FIGHTER.

and tier, is held for some seconds in breathless suspense: above, the glorious azure canopy of an Andalucian summer sky: below, on the yellow arena, rushes forth the bull, fresh from his distant prairie, amazed yet undaunted by the unwonted sight and the bewildering blaze of colour

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which surrounds him. For one brief moment the vast mass of excited humanity sits spell-bound: the clamour of myriads is stilled. Then the pent-up cry bursts forth in frantic volume, for the gleaming horns have done their work, and *buen toro! buen toro!* rings from twice ten thousand throats.

The bull-rings are mostly the property of private persons, though some are owned by corporations, others by charitable institutions, and the like. The bull-fights themselves, however, are always in the hands of an *empresario*, who hires the building at a rent, supplies the bulls and *troupe*, and takes the whole arrangements in his own hands and for his own account.

The cost of a modern bull-fight in Andalucia ranges from £1,100 to £1,200. Six bulls are usually killed, their value averaging £70. The *Espada*, or Matador, receives on the day from £120 to £200, including the services of his cuadrilla or troupe, which consists of two picadors, three banderilleros, and a cachetero. As there are always two matadors with their respective cuadrillas engaged, this makes in all fourteen bull-fighters. The cost of the horses is about £120 to £200, a variable quantity, depending so much on the temper and quality of the bulls. Against this, there are from ten to twenty thousand seats to be let in the ring, the prices of which vary from a peseta or two in the *Sol* or sunny side, up to a couple of dollars or more in the *Sombra*.*

The president of the corrida is usually the alcalde or mayor of the town—sometimes the civil governor of the province, always some person of weight and authority, though the alcalde is responsible for the orderly conduct of

* The bull-fighters and their friends affect a language peculiar to the Plaza: a dialect of systematic construction. To acquire a knowledge of this "Jerga" (La Germania), with its idiomatic piquancy and raciness, is the aim of the "fancy" young men, the *Flamencos* of Southern Spain. To be in the circle of the popular bull-fighters, with its perilous female entourage, is considered *chic* by certain gilded youth. Flamenco-ism appears to find its *beau idéal* in the borderland which lies between the bizarre existence of the "torero" and the Gitano or gypsy. (*See* chapter on the Spanish Gypsy of to-day.)

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the corrida, even should he delegate the presidential chair to some one of higher authority. He is required to examine the bulls before the fight: that is, to see that they bear the brand of the herd advertised, and have no visible defect; then he must inspect the horses; even the banderillas and the garrochas, the points of which latter must be shortened as autumn approaches. Till the alcalde appears in his tribune, the fight may not commence, and during the spectacle he orders the incoming of each bull,

AN *ESPADA*, OR MATADOR.

the time which the picadors shall occupy with their lances: he directs the trumpets of his attendant heralds to sound the changes in the fight, when banderilleros succeed picadors, and for the final scene, when the matador steps alone upon the arena, with scarlet cloak and gleaming sword.

It will thus be seen that the presidential function involves a fairly deep knowledge of all the arts and etiquette of tauromachian science. Under intelligent direction, acci-

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dents in the ring and tumults amongst dissatisfied multitudes are avoided—without it, the reverse.

We have now traced in brief outline the life-history of our gallant bull; we have brought him face to face with Frascuelo and his Toledan blade; there we must leave him. But, in concluding this chapter, may we beg the generous reader, should he ever enter the historic circle of the plaza, to go there with an open mind—without prejudice, and unbiassed by the floods of invective which have ever been let loose upon the Spanish bull-fight.

Let critics remember, if only in extenuation, what the spectacle represents to Spain—a national festival, the love of which we have shown to be ineradicable, ingrained in Spanish nature by centuries of custom and tradition. Let them reflect, too, that those brutal domestic scenes which disgrace so many a home among the poor of other lands are, in the land of the bull-fighter, unknown. Lastly, let them remember that upon untrained eyes there must fall flat many of the finer passes, much of the elaborate technique and science of tauromachian art: points which are instantly seized and appreciated by Spanish experts—and in Spain *all* are experts. This is lost to the casual spectator, who perceives less difficulty in the perilous *vol-á-pié* than in the simpler, though more attractive, *suerte de recibir*, and a thousand other technical details.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE BÆTICAN WILDERNESS.

SPRING-NOTES OF BIRD-LIFE, NATURAL HISTORY, AND EXPLORATION IN THE MARISMA.

PART I.—APRIL.

ANDALUCIA may roughly be subdivided into four main regions, unequal in extent, but of well-marked physical characters and conformation. These are the sierras, and the rolling corn-lands, at both of which we have already glanced. Then there are the *dehesas*—wild, uncultivated wastes or prairies, of which more anon. Lastly, there are the *marismas*.

We have in English no equivalent to the Spanish "marisma," and these regions are so peculiar, both physically and ornithologically, as to require a short description. Geologically, the marismas are the deltas of great rivers, the alluvial accumulations of ages, deposited, layer upon layer, on the sea-bottom till the myriad particles thrust back the sea, and form level plains of dry land. The struggle between rival elements does not terminate, but the attacks of the liquid combatant only seem to result in still further assuring the victory of *terra firma*, by bank-

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ing up between the opposing forces an impregnable rampart of sand. The latter, overlying the margin of the rich alluvial mud, is thus capable, in its hollows and deeper dells, of sustaining a luxuriant plant-life, which in turn serves to fortify and consolidate its otherwise unstable consistency.*

The largest of the Spanish marismas, and those best known to the authors, are those of the Guadalquivír. If the reader will look at a map of Spain, there will be noticed on the Lower Guadalquivír a large tract totally devoid of the names of villages, &c. From Lebrija on the east to Almonte on the west, and from the Atlantic almost up to Seville itself, the map is vacant. This huge area is, in fact, a wilderness, and in winter the greater part a dismal waste of waters. For league after league as one advances into that forbidding desolation, the eye rests on nothing but water—tawny waters meeting the sky all round the horizon. The Guadalquivír intersects the marisma, its triple channel divided from the adjacent shallows and savannahs by low mud-banks. The water of the marisma is fresh, or nearly so—quite drinkable—and has a uniform depth over vast areas of one or two feet, according to the season. Here and there slight elevations of its muddy bed form low islands, varying from a few yards to thousands of acres in extent, covered with coarse herbage, thistles and bog-plants, the home of countless wild-fowl and aquatic birds. In spring the water recedes; as the hot weather sets in it rapidly evaporates, leaving the marisma a dead level of dry mud, scorched and cracked by the fierce summer sun. A rank herbage springs up, and around the remaining water-holes wave beds of tall reeds and cane-brakes.

In winter the marshy plains abound with wild-fowl, ducks, geese, and water-birds of varied kinds; but of the winter season in the marisma, its fowl and fowlers, we treat fully hereafter.

The spring-months abound in interest to the naturalist.

* The *mancha* of Salavar in the Coto Doñana is an example of one of these green oases amidst barren, lifeless sand-wastes.

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Imagination can hardly picture, nor Nature provide, a region more congenial to the tastes of wild aquatic birds than these huge marismas, with their silent stretches of marsh-land and savannahs, cane-brake and stagnant waters, and their profusion of plant and insect life. Here, in spring, in an ornithological Eden, one sees almost daily new bird-forms. During the vernal migration the still air resounds with unknown notes, and many of those species which at home are the rarest—hardly known save in books or museums—are here the most conspicuous, filling the desolate landscape with life and animation. The months of February and March witness the withdrawal of most of the winter wild-fowl. Day after day the clouds of Pintails and Wigeon, of Shovellers, Pochards, and Teal, and fresh files of grey geese wing their way northwards; while their places are simultaneously being filled by arrivals from the south. April brings an influx of graceful forms and many sub-tropical species, for which Andalucia forms, roughly speaking, the northern limit; while in May is superadded a "through transit," which renders the bird-life of that period at times almost bewildering.

But before attempting to fill in the details, it is necessary to explain the mode of travel and the methods by which these wildernesses can be investigated. Uninhabited and abandoned to wild-fowl and flamingoes, and lying remote from any "base of operations," the exploration of the marismas is an undertaking of some difficulty. They cannot, owing to their extent, be worked from any single base; hence, thoroughly to explore them and penetrate their lonely expanses, necessitates a well-equipped expedition, independent of external aid, and prepared to encamp night after night among the tamarisks or samphire on bleak islet or barren *arenal*. Some of our earlier efforts, twenty years ago, resulted in total failure. Setting out by way of the river, the light launches suitable for the shallow marisma proved unequal to the voyage up the broad Guadalquivir; while, on the other hand, the larger craft in which that exposed estuary could be safely navigated were useless in the shallows. One attempt was

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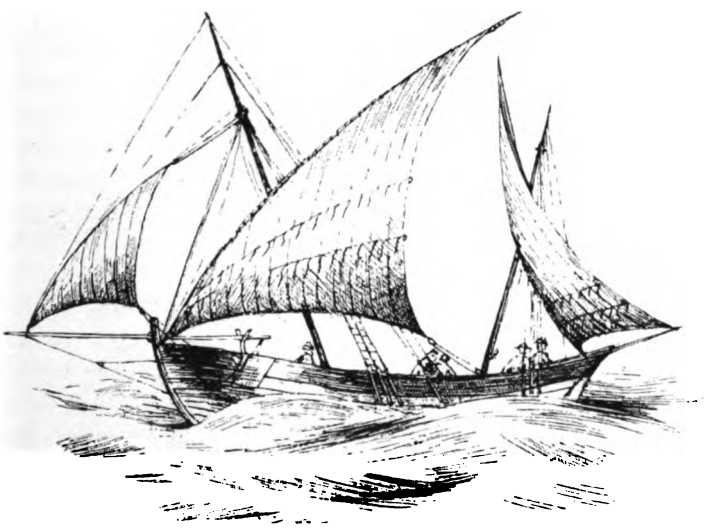
frustrated by sunstroke; on another our Spanish crew "struck" through stress of weather, leaving us at a lonely spot some thirty miles beyond Bonanza with no alternative but to submit, or go on alone. We had, however, some reward for this enforced tramp in discovering the Dunlin (*Tringa alpina*) nesting at a point over a thousand miles south of any previous record of its breeding-range. Finally, we chartered at San Lucar a large fishing-yawl, bound up-river, and after a long day in that



FISHING BOAT ON THE GUADALQUIVIR.

malodorous craft, beating up against wind and stream, and with our three punts in tow, we at length succeeded in launching them on the waters of the middle marismas.

The geese and wigeon had entirely disappeared—this was early in April—but passage-ducks still skimmed in large flights over the open waters. These were chiefly Mallards, with Pintails and Pochards (both species), a few Teal, Garganey, and probably other species. We also shot Shovellers out of small "bunches," and among the deep sluices of some abandoned salt-pans (*salinas*), where

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we spent the first night, three or four Tufted Ducks, and a pair of Pochards. I killed a single Scoter drake as late as April 13th, and was shown as a curiosity a Cormorant which had been killed by some fishermen on the river a day or two before.

One cannot go far into the marisma without seeing that extraordinary fowl, the Flamingo, certainly the most characteristic denizen of the wilderness. In herds of 300 to 500, several of which are often in sight at once, they stand like regiments, feeding in the open water, all

heads under, greedily tearing up the grasses and water-plants that grow beneath the surface. On approaching them, which can only be done by extreme caution, their silence is first broken by the sentries, which commence walking away with low croaks: then the whole five hundred necks rise at once to full stretch, every bird gaggling his loudest as they walk obliquely away, looking back over their shoulders as though to take stock of the extent of the danger. Shoving the punt a few yards forward, up they all rise, and a more beautiful sight cannot be imagined than the simultaneous spreading of their thousand crimson

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wings, flashing against the sky like a gleam of rosy light. Then one descends to the practical, and a volley of slugs cuts a lane through their phalanx.

In many respects these birds bear a strong resemblance to geese. Like the latter, Flamingoes feed by day: and quantities of grass, etc., are always floating about the muddy water at the spot where a herd has been feeding. Their cry is almost indistinguishable from the gaggling of geese, and they fly in the same chain-like formations. The irides of the oldest individuals are very pale lemon-yellow: the bare skin between the bill and the eye is also yellow, and the whole plumage beautifully suffused with warm pink. In the young birds of one year (which do not breed) this pink shade is entirely absent, and even their wings bear but slight traces of it. The secondaries and tertiaries of these immature birds are barred irregularly with black spots, and their legs, bills and eyes are of a dull lead colour. In size flamingoes vary greatly: the largest we have measured was fully six feet five inches—there are some quite seven feet—while others (old red birds) barely reached five feet.

The further we advanced into the marisma the more abundant became the bird-life. Besides ducks and flamingoes, troops of long-legged Stilts in places whitened the waters, and chattering bands of Avocets swept over the marshy islets: around these also gyrated clouds of Dunlins in full breeding-plumage: smaller flights, composed of Kentish plovers and Lesser Ring-dotterel mixed, with Redshanks and Peewits: the two latter paired. One morning at daybreak, a pack of two hundred Black-tailed Godwits pitched on an islet hard by our camp, probably tired with a long migratory journey, for these wary birds allowed two punts to run almost "aboard them," and received a raking broadside at thirty yards.* On April 11th we obtained a

* These Godwits (*Limosa belgica*) are more common on passage earlier in the spring. We have seen flights of many hundreds in February and March. The Common Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa rufa*) we have never chanced to meet with here, either in winter or spring—only on its southern passage, in September.

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single Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), swimming like a little duck on an open *arroyo*, and the Sanderling, Green and Common Sandpipers, were all abundant, together with Ruffs and Reeves, though in mid-April the former still lacked the full nuptial dress. Greenshanks and Knots we did not meet with then; though a month later (in May) swarms of both these species, together with Whimbrels, Grey Plovers, and Curlew-Sandpipers, all in perfect summer plumage, poured into the marisma, to rest and recruit on their direct transit from Africa to the Arctic.

On April 8th the Pratincoles arrived, and thenceforward their zigzag flight and harsh croak were constantly in evidence all over the dry mud and sand, where they feed on beetles. In 1891 we observed a "rush" of these birds, some arriving, and others passing over high, almost out of sight, on the 11th of April. Sometimes a score of these curious birds would cast themselves down on the bare ground all around one, some with expanded wings, and all lying head to wind, much as a nightjar squats on the sand. Pratincoles resemble terns when standing, but run like plovers, and on summer evenings, with the terns, they hawk after insects like swallows. Their beaks have a very wide gape which is bordered with vermilion.

Another conspicuous bird-group in the marisma are the herons, of which seven or eight species are here, more or less numerous. Besides the Common and Purple Herons, the Buff-backed, Squacco, and Night Herons, Egrets, Spoonbills, and Glossy Ibis are also found, and several of one kind or the other can generally be descried on the open marsh—the first-named often perched on the backs of the cattle or wild-bred ponies of the marisma, ridding them of the ticks and "warbles," or embryo gadflies which burrow in the poor brutes' hides. The rush-girt *arroyos*, or stagnant channels, were dotted with these most elegant birds, some actively feeding, plunging their heads under to catch the darting water-beetles as they dive, others resting quiescent in every graceful pose. Here is a description of such a spot:—*April 29th*. Lying this morning in the punt, well hidden among thick tamarisks, in the

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arroyo del Junco Real, we had no less than twelve interesting species within 200 yards: ducks of four kinds dipped and splashed on the open water, viz.:—Mallards, Garganey, Marbled Duck, and one pair of handsome, heavy-headed "Porrones" (*Erismatura leucocephala*). Sundry Stilts, Egrets, and four Squacco Herons stalked sedately in the shallows—one of the latter presently perching on a broken

bulrush within ten yards of the boat. A group of Avocets slept standing, each on one leg, on a dry point; and further away, two Spoonbills were busy sifting the soft mud with curious revolving gait. Coots and Grebes (*Podicipes nigricollis*) kept dodging in and out among the flags and aquatic plants, and a Marsh-Harrier, whose mate was sitting in an adjoining cane-brake, soared in the background. This is not counting the commoner kinds, nor several others which

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we afterwards observed close by: the above were all in sight, mostly in shot, at one spot.

The Coots and Mallards have eggs in March, the Purple Heron early in April: on the 9th we found the first nest, merely an armful of the long green reeds bent down, and containing one blue egg. The other herons nest very late —in June.

One other bird-group remains to be briefly mentioned—the *Larinæ*. In so congenial a resort they are, of course, in force: but in early April few gulls, beyond the British species, are noticeable*—of others, anon. The Whiskered Tern (*Hydrochelidon hybrida*) came in swarms during the first days of April, followed on the 13th by the Lesser Tern, and at the end of the month by *H. nigra*, the Black Tern, all of which abound, gracefully hovering over every pool or reed-choked marsh. The larger Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna anglica*) is also common in summer in the marisma, where we have taken the eggs of all four species.

The utter loneliness and desolation of the middle marismas are a sensation to be remembered. Hour after hour one pushes forward across the flooded plain, only to bring within view more and yet more vistas of watery waste and endless horizons of tawny water. On a low islet in the far distance stand a herd of cattle—mere points in space: but they, too, partake of the general wildness, and splash off at a galop while yet a mile away. Even the horses or ponies of the marisma seem to have reverted to their original man-fearing state, and are as shy and timid as any of the *ferœ naturæ*. After long days on the monotonous marisma, one's wearied eyes at length rejoice at a vision of trees—a dark green pine-grove casting grateful shade on the scorching sands beneath. To that

* Kittiwakes and Black-headed Gulls in swarms during March and early April, whitening acres of water. The latter remained till perfect summer-plumage is attained (by March 21st). Little Gulls frequent: on two occasions (in February and March) observed in scores. *Larus fuscus* and *L. argentatus* were common in March, and on April 5th we obtained an adult of *L. marinus* in the marisma. Of British Terns, *S. cantiaca* and *S. fluviatilis*, were noticed in early spring.

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oasis we direct our course: but it is a fraud, one of Nature's cruel mockeries—a mirage. Not a tree grows on that spot, or within leagues of it, nor has done for ages—perhaps since time began.

Upon a dreary islet we land to form a camp for the night: that is, to arrange our upturned punts around such scanty fire as can be raised from a few armfuls of tamarisks and dead thistles—all that our little domain produces—assisted by a few pine-cones, brought for the purpose in the boats. Dinner is cooked in the little block-tin camp-stove, or *sarten prusiano*, as the Spaniards call it, which only demands a modicum of lard and a sharp fire to reduce a rabbit or a duck to eatable state within a few minutes. The fare which can be obtained by the gun at this season is meagre enough: ducks or plovers are sorry food for hungry men, though a hare, shot on a grassy savanna, is acceptable enough; nor are the eggs of coot or peewit to be despised. Later, we experimented on many oological varieties, especially Stilt's and Avocet's eggs. The latter are excellent, boiling pale yellow and half opaque, like those of plover: but the Stilt's eggs are too red in the yolk to be tempting. Our men were not so squeamish: but then they did not even stick at the eggs of Kites or Vultures. After all, it is safer to rely in the main on Australian mutton, tinned ox-tongues from the Plate, or indigenous "jamon dulce;" but the difficulties of transport in tiny *lanchas* forbid one's being entirely independent of local fare.

The memories of our earliest experiences in the Spanish marismas, in April, 1872, do not fade. The glorious wild-life fascinated and exhilarated, while youthful enthusiasm ignored all drawbacks. But in later years it is perhaps excusable if a slight doubt of the bliss of campaigning in winter may temporarily arise when one is awakened in the middle watches of the night by sheer penetrating cold, finds the fire burnt out, the trusted *Españoles* all asleep, and the tail of a big black snake sticking out from under one's bed, or the poke of straw which is serving the purpose.

The night of April 10th we spent at Rocío, a squalid

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hamlet clustered around the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rocío, an ancient shrine visited yearly at the vernal festival by faithful pilgrims. We were tired of the cold and comfortless nights *sub Jove* in the marisma, where upturned punts afforded scant shelter from the piercing winds of the small hours, and where the chill exhalations of night kept one awake listening to the chorus of frogs and flamingoes and the melancholy boom of the bittern. It was hardly a change for the better, for a more wretched ague-stricken spot we have seldom beheld, and in the dirty little *posada* man and beast were reckoned exactly equal in relation to the "accommodation" they require. The bed provided was a dirty mat of esparto grass, six feet by two, unrolled and laid on the bare ground: but the mosquitoes and other insect plagues made sleep impossible, and the night was spent in skinning the day's captures. The four-league tramp, however, through sandy, scrub-covered plains, was a relief from the monotonous marisma, and there were fresh birds for a change. The low, soft, double note of the Hoopoe was ubiquitous; brilliant Bee-eaters, Rollers, and Golden Orioles flashed like jewels in the sunshine, amidst the groves of wild olive and alcornoque: Southern Grey Shrikes (*Lanius meridionalis*) mumbled their harsh "wee hāte" from some tree-top or tall shoot of cistus, and Turtle-doves actually swarmed—all these birds (except the shrikes) newly returned from African scenes. We also observed a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, and a single Azure-winged Magpie—the only occurrence of the latter we had then met with in this district, though further inland it is common near Coria del Rio, and towards Córdova it becomes plentiful. Near Rocio, also, we obtained the Red-backed Shrike, a species not previously recorded from Southern Spain.

Another interesting bird seen and shot this day for the first time was the Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Coccystes glandarius*), and shortly afterwards, while sitting at lunch during the mid-day heat, a female Hen-Harrier, which slowly passed within very long shot, and caused me to upset my last bottle of Bass. This was the latest date on

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Plate XIV. BOOTED EAGLE—Female, shot 11th April, 1872. Page 81.

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which we saw this strictly winter-visitant to Andalucia, none remaining to breed, though it is plentiful enough in winter, and frequently observed while snipe-shooting.

Early next morning (April 11th) we started to explore the wooded swamps called La Rocina de la Madre—a nasty place to work: consisting of thousands of grassy tussocks, each surrounded by bog, in some places moderately firm and safe, in others, apparently similar, deep and dangerous, and everywhere swarming with leeches. In the centre of the open marsh, surrounded by quaking-bog and a dense growth of aquatic vegetation, rose a thick clump of low trees, whose snake-like roots were growing out of the black and stagnant water. These trees were occupied, some laden, with hundreds of stick-built nests, the abodes of the southern herons some of which we have already mentioned—Egrets, Squaccos, Buff-backs, Night-Herons, and the like: but nearly all this group nest very late (in June), and the colony was at this season tenantless. In subsequent years we have obtained in these wooded swamps the eggs of all the European herons: though it is not *every* summer that they repair thither to breed. In very dry seasons none are to be seen, but after a rainy spring, these heron-colonies of the marisma are indeed a wondrous sight —an almost sufficing reward for enduring the heat, the languor-laden miasmas, and the fury of the myriad mosquitos and leeches which in summer infest these remote marshy regions.

Climbing across the gnarled tree-roots to the other end of the thicket, we found a larger nest, and just as we emerged on the open, its owner, a female Booted Eagle, passed within reach as she slowly quartered the marsh, and fell to a charge of No. 2. This small, but compact and handsome species, has been confounded with the Rough-legged Buzzard; but no one who has seen *Aquila pennata* on the wing could mistake it for anything but an eagle. The nest proved empty, after a difficult climb up a briar-entwined trunk: but on the following day we found another, in the first fork of a big cork-tree, containing one white egg. Three is the full number laid by the Booted Eagle.

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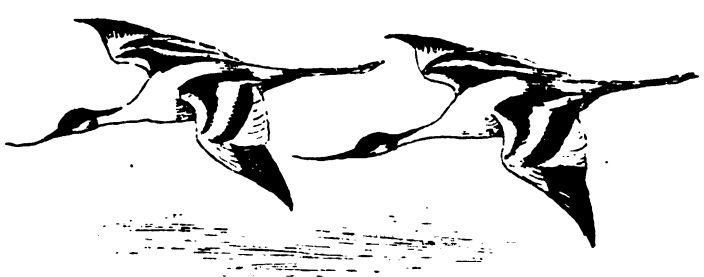
In another part of the wood was a nesting colony of the Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*), several of which soared high overhead. These birds hardly commence domestic duties in earnest before May, but after some trouble I succeeded in shooting a fine adult: also a pair of Purple Herons, of which we found three nests, and a single Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) from her nest in a broken stump, which contained one egg. After this we were obliged to beat a retreat, for the swarming hordes of leeches had developed so strong a taste for the bare legs of our two men that a return to *terra firma* became necessary.

The whole region for many a league around Rocío is one dead-flat plain—dry scrubby brushwood or stagnant marsh and marisma. To the northward, in the farthest distance are discernible the dim blue outspurs of the Sierra de Aracena; but beyond its charms to naturalist or sportsman, the district has few other attractions. After spending ten days in the wilderness, we set our faces homewards, and were not sorry on the third evening, after re-traversing the waste, to sight once more the white towers and lustred domes of San Lucar de Barameda.



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CHAPTER VII.

THE BÆTICAN WILDERNESS.

SPRING NOTES OF BIRD-LIFE AND NATURAL HISTORY IN THE MARISMA.

Part II.—May.

On a bright May morning we set out for a fortnight's sojourn in the western marismas. For the last few miles the route lies through broken woodlands, all wrapt in the glory of the southern spring-time. There is no lack of verdure here at mid-winter—not even the deciduous trees are ever really bare: but in May the whole plant-world is fresh-clad in brightest garb and beauty—it is worth staying a moment to examine such prodigal luxuriance. Before us, for example, is a grove of stone-pines, embedded to their centres amidst dark green thicket; through the massed foliage of lentiscus and briar shoots up a forest of waving bamboos, tall almost and straight as the pines themselves; the foreground filled with the delicate mauve of rosemary, with giant heather and heaths of a dozen hues, all wrestling for space, with clumps of pampas-grass and palmetto, genista, butcher's-broom, and wild fennel.

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Here a mass of *abolága*, or Spanish gorse, ablaze with golden bloom; an arbutus blanched with waxen blossoms, or the glossy foliage of mimosa; there the sombre tones of the ilex are relieved by the pale emerald of a wild vine entwined upon the trunk. Even the stretches of grey gum-cistus have become almost gaudy with their pink, white, and pale yellow flowers. The air breathes of vernal perfumes, and the infinite chorus of spring bird-notes—the soft refrain of Goldfinch and Serin, Nightingale, *Hypolais polyglotta*, Orphean and other warblers, the dual note of Hoopoe, and flute-like carol of Golden Orioles, mingled with the harsher cries of Woodchat and Bee-eater, and on all sides the 'voice of the Turtle was heard in the land.'

The sun was high in the heavens ere we cleared the fragrant *pinales;* yet in the last rushy glade we rode suddenly into a herd of wild pig; females with their half-grown young—probably the exigencies of the season explained their being astir at so unusual an hour. Shortly afterwards the writer almost trod on two boars, deeply slumbering in an isolated thicket—one an old tusker, grizzly with age, and looking almost white as he trotted away across the dunes.

Presently, through a vista of the forest, we sighted the marisma, its muddy expanse to-day blue as the Mediterranean. An animated scene lay before us; the wastes were thronged with bird-life. The horizon glistened with the sheen of Flamingoes in thousands, and the intervening space lay streaked and dotted with flights and flotillas of aquatic fowl. The nearer foreshores, fringed with rush and sedge and dark stretches of tamarisk, were peopled with Storks and Herons, Egrets, Spoonbills, Stilts, Avocets, and other waders. While breakfasting under a spreading pine, we observed commotion among our feathered neighbours—the whole multitude had risen on wing as a single Booted Eagle swept over the scene.

Rambling along the shore, we obtained many beautiful specimens by stalking, including most of those above named, as well as a pair of Marbled Ducks, a wild-cat, and other "sundries." Presently we observed with the glass

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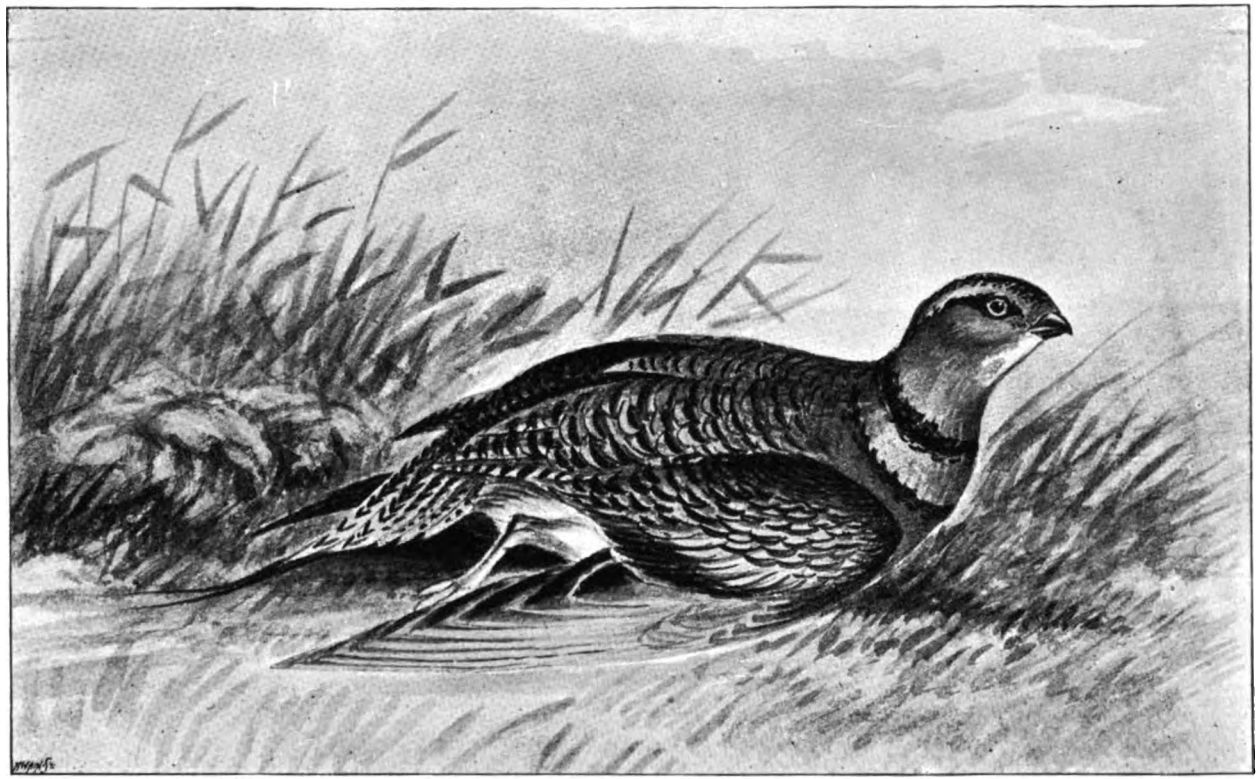

Plate XV. PINTAILED SAND-GROUSE: FEMALE. (*Pterocles alchata.*) Page 85.

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a score or so of Knots, in full red summer-plumage, busily feeding rather far out. While creeping to them, a Marsh-Harrier rose from some rushes close at hand; I knocked him down and found he was lunching on a Knot. The latter we could not see again—though later in the month they were in thousands—but made out a "bunch" of Greenshanks feeding a little further on, one of which fell to a long shot—an immature bird. Curiously, we found no adults here, though in March they were numerous in some disused *salinas* beyond Tangier, but no young ones. The adults are distinguishable by their whiter appearance at a distance.

Our course lay across a wide bight of the marisma, which projects into the land. Crossing this, nearly knee-deep in mud and water in many parts, we fell in with three packs of Sand-Grouse (*Pterocles alchata*). They were excessively wild, flying fast and high, something like teal, anon like plover, and uttering a chorus of harsh croaks. On the open marsh we almost despaired of outmanœuvring them. We stuck to them, however, and, after many failures, obtained some beautiful specimens of both sexes, and well worth the trouble they were; for no bird we have ever seen rivals the Pin-tailed Sand-Grouse for delicacy of pencilling and the harmonious contrasts of infinite colours in its plumage. In the females especially, the spring-plumage is so variegated as to defy description, the patterns, so to speak, being as elaborate as the tints. Briefly, her back is finely reticulated with yellows and browns, blacks and maroons of various shades, all relieved by clean-cut bars of pale blue. Her head is speckled above the black line which passes through the eye; below that, the cheeks and throat are plain buff, and the chest clear bright chestnut, doubly margined with black and with a pale blue band above. In the male the features of the spring-plumage are a black throat, and a line of that colour through the eye. The pale sage-green back is covered with large lemon spots, some of which extend to the scapulars and tertiaries. The eye-circlets and eyelids are bright blue in both sexes, and at all seasons: of their winter-dress and habits we

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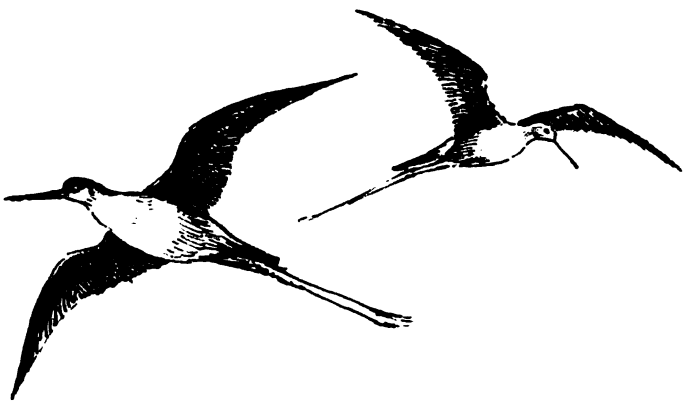
write elsewhere; but no description or sketch of ours can do adequate justice to this gem among birds.

The name of sand-grouse is not appropriate, for they are in no sense grouse, and are never found on sand—always on mud, and when shot their feet and bills are generally covered therewith. There is another and larger species, the Black-bellied Sand-Grouse (*Pterocles arenarius*), which is not found *here*, but is very abundant in parts of the upper marisma, towards Seville, and especially in the so-called Isla Menor, where we have shot several when bustard-driving, and found a nest with three long elliptic eggs on May 28th, besides seeing several others found by



STILTS—HOVERING OVERHEAD.

our men. These birds—in Spanish *Corteza*—nest on the bare pasturages of the upper marisma, and also on the high central plateaux of Spain, in Castile, La Mancha, &c., a very different region. The Pin-tailed species is known as *Ganga*, signifying a bargain, in reference to its edible qualities.

After heavy rains in April, the mud and water in the marisma were unpleasantly deep for either riding or walking—we had now abandoned the punts; and on the low islands many thousands of eggs had been destroyed by the rising of the water. A great variety of birds were now nesting, Stilts and Avocets being, perhaps, the most con-

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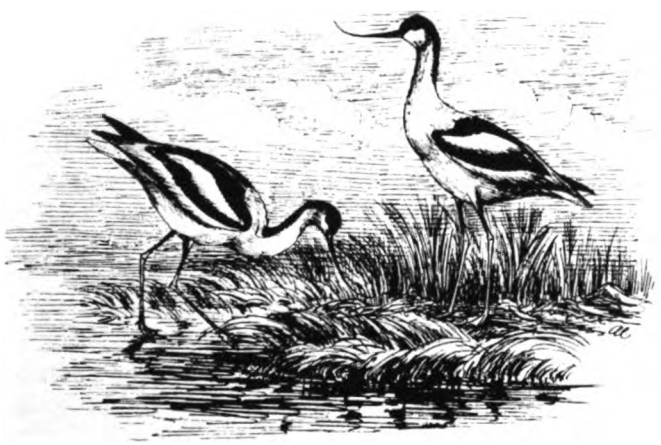
spicuous. We found a few eggs of both on the mud-flats to-day (May 5th), but a few days later they were in thousands. The Stilts make a fairly solid nest of dead black stalks of tamarisk, &c., and lay four richly-marked eggs, all arranged points inwards; the Avocet's eggs are larger and lighter in colour, and these birds seldom have any nest at all, the three eggs merely laid at random on the bare cracked mud, often an inch or two apart. Three is the usual complement.

A most curious picture do these singular birds present, either while flying past or hovering overhead on quick-



AVOCETS.

beating pinions, with their absurdly long legs extending far behind like dead straws. The Avocet is much the more sprightly and game-like of the two, with his shrill pipe and elegant flight, now rapid and "jerky," now skimming low on the water. But we never tire of watching the quaint actions and postures of the Stilts, troops of which stalk sedately in the shallows close at hand. So extremely long are the legs of this bird that, with their short necks, they cannot reach down to the ground, nor pick anything up therefrom. They are consequently only to be seen feeding in water about knee-deep, for which

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purpose their peculiar build specially adapts them, picking up seeds, insects and aquatic plants from the surface.*

We found many nests of Peewit and Redshank, those of the latter by far the best concealed, always in some thick clump of grass or samphire. Such familiar notes sound strangely incongruous amid the exotic bird-medley around, and the fact of their remaining to nest so far south is an ornithological curiosity. Birds which are at once inhabitants of the extreme north of Europe, and yet capable of enduring the summer-heats of the Andalucian plains, set at nought one's ideas of geographical distribution. As already mentioned, we also found in April the Dunlin nesting on the lower Guadalquivir, and our friend Mr. W. C. Tait has detected the Common Sandpiper remaining to breed on the Lima and Minho in Portugal.

There also lay scattered on the dry mud many clutches of smaller eggs belonging to two other species, the Kentish Plover and Lesser Ring-dotterel. The latter, less common, were only beginning to lay, choosing the drier, gravelly ridges of the islets. The eggs of the Kentish plover we had found as early as April 14th, and in May many were already much incubated. Neither of these make any nest —nothing but a few broken shells—and some eggs were deposited in a hollow scratched in dried cattle-droppings. On these islands were also many nests of the Spanish Short-toed lark (*Calandrella bætica*, Dresser—a species peculiar to this region), artlessly built of dry grass, and placed in small hollows like a dunlin's, sometimes among thistles, as often on bare ground without covert. We found the first eggs on May 9th. On the larger grassy islands there also breed the Calandra, Crested and Short-toed Larks, with Ortolan, Common and Reed-buntings.

* When first hatched, the legs of the young Stilts are quite short; but by mid-June are of medium length, pale clay-colour, and curiously swollen about the knee-joint. The upper plumage of the young at that date is mottled brown, irides brown. By the following January these young Stilts have acquired a black and white plumage; but the irides remain dark, and the legs a pale pink. The adults vary in the disposition of black and white in their plumage, especially on head and neck, and some few have the breast prettily tinged with roseate.

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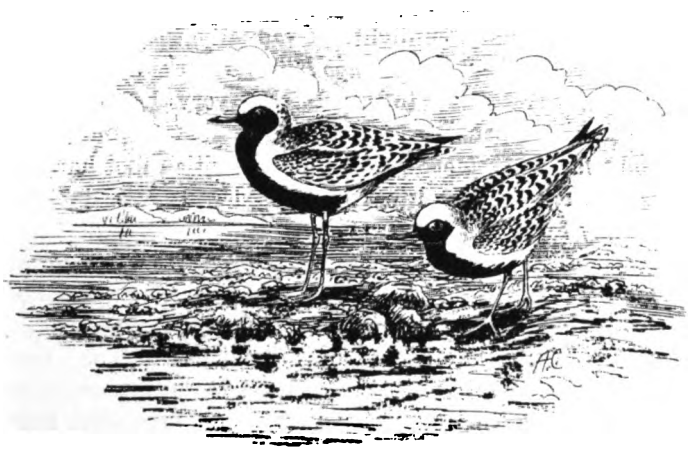
May 8th, 1872.—A remarkable passage of waders occurred to-day: the banks of the Guadalete swarmed with bird-life, some of the oozes crowded with plovers, &c., as thick as they could stand. A mixed bag included whimbrels, grey plovers, ring-dotterel, curlew-sandpiper, sand-grouse, &c. Many of the Grey Plovers were superb specimens in perfect black-and-white plumage, and the Curlew-Sand-pipers in richest rufous summer-dress. Unfortunately, the attractions of the Great Bustard, several of which were also



GREY PLOVERS—SUMMER-PLUMAGE.

in sight, proved irresistible: but I had the satisfaction of riding home that evening with my first bustard slung to the *alforjas*. The next day, as is often the case, hardly a passage-bird was to be seen, and my bag only contained a pair of Grey Phalaropes, and a female Montagu's Harrier.

May 9th, 1883.—The effects of dawn over the vast desolations of the marisma were specially beautiful this morning. Before sunrise the distant peaks of the Serrania de Ronda (seventy miles away) lay flooded in a blood-red light, and looking quite twice their usual height. Half an hour later the mountains sank back in a golden glow, and long before mid-day were invisible through the

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quivering heat-haze and the atmospheric fantasies of infinite space. Amid a chaotic confusion of mirage-effects, we rode out across the level plain—at first across dry mud-flats, partly carpeted with a dwarf scrub of marsh-plants, in places bare and naked, the sun-scorched surface cracked into rhomboids and parallelograms, and honeycombed with deep cattle-tracks made long ago when the mud was moist and plastic. Then through shallow marsh and stagnant waters, gradually deepening. Here from a rushy patch sprang three yeld hinds from almost underfoot, and splashed off through the shallows, their russet coats gleaming in the morning sunlight. Gradually the water deepened: *mucha agua, mucho fango!* groaned Felipe; but this morning we intended to reach the very heart of the marisma: and before ten o'clock were cooking our breakfast on a far-away islet whereon never British foot had trod before, and which was literally covered with Avocets' eggs, and many more.

Here, while I was busy selecting, numbering, and preparing some of the most typical clutches, Felipe, whom I had sent to explore another islet close by, came up with five eggs, which he said he thought must be gull's. I saw at a glance he was right, and jumping up, espied among the clamorous crowd of marsh-terns, avocets, stilts, pratincoles, and other birds overhead, a single pair of strangers—small, very long-necked gulls. These I promptly knocked down, and at once recognized as *Larus gelastes*, one of the rarest of the South European gulls, and of whose breeding-places and habits comparatively little was known. Only a few days before I had received a letter from Mr. Howard Saunders especially enjoining me to keep a strict look-out for "the beautiful pink-breasted, Slender-billed Gull"; we therefore at once commenced a careful investigation of all the islands in sight, never dreaming but that our two gulls and the five eggs were duly related to each other. It was therefore with no small surprise that shortly afterwards I found another gull's nest containing two very different eggs (white ground, spotted with black and brown like those

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of *Sterna cantiaca*), from which I also shot a female *L. gelastes*.* This time, however, there was no room for doubt: for the bird while in its death-throes actually laid a third egg in the water—a perfectly coloured and developed specimen, the exact counterpart of the two in the nest. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, I found on skinning the first pair of gulls that the female contained a fourth perfectly developed specimen of this very distinct egg. This of course placed the identity of the eggs of *L. gelastes* beyond doubt: it was, however, equally certain that the first five eggs (which were dull greenish or stone-colour, faintly spotted with brown) belonged to some other species. Accordingly I returned to the first-named islands, and at once perceived two or three pairs of small black-hooded gulls: these had doubtless been overlooked in the morning, mixed up as they were among numbers of gull-billed terns and other birds. They would not allow approach within shot, so I was obliged to risk a long chance with wire-cartridge. The bird was "feathered," but escaped at the moment. Two days afterwards, however, on a second visit, I found it lying dead, and recognized it by the jet-black hood and strong bill as *Larus melanocephalus*, another of the rarer gulls, and presumably the owner of one of the first two nests. Those of the slender-billed gull, it should be added, were composed of yellow flags, the nests of *L. melanocephalus* of black tamarisk-stalks and other dark materials. To obtain in a single morning the nests of two of the rarest of European breeding birds was a measure of luck that rarely falls to the lot of an ornithologist: though the discovery, made a few hours later, of the breeding quarters of the flamingoes, appears to carry more ornithological kudos—*quantum valeat*.

May 11*th*.—The Pratincoles are now beginning to lay—one or two eggs in each nest: but subsequently we got them in baskets-full. Some of these eggs when freshly-laid have a

* A pair of the *L. gelastes* shot this day (together with some other of our Spanish specimens) are now set up in the Hancock Museum at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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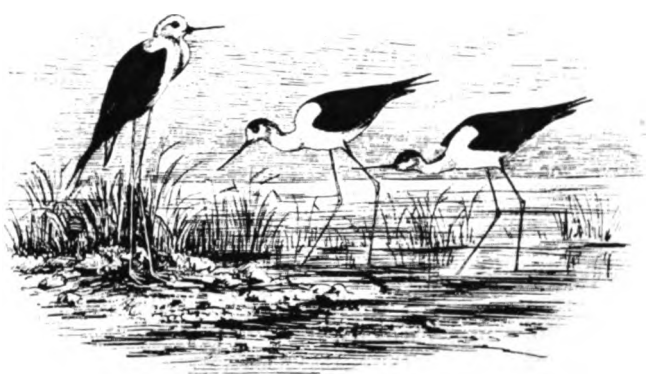
beautiful purplish gloss. Three is their complement, and they make hardly any nest, merely a few broken chips of shells. We also found to-day, on the marismas of Guadalete, two nests of the Montagu's Harrier, each with five or six eggs, mere outlines of broken twigs arranged on the bare soil, one among low scrub, the other in the corn. The Marsh-Harrier breeds much earlier. We found this year three nests at the end of March—much more solid structures, built of dead flags, &c.: one was in standing corn, another on the ground in a cane-brake, the third on the top of a dense bramble-thicket, fifteen feet high—a



IN THE MARISMA—STILTS.

very awkward place to get at. Occasionally, where there was much water, we have found the Montagu's Harrier also nesting in brushwood, three or four feet above the ground. In the water beneath are strewn skulls of rabbits, vertebræ of lizards, &c.

Later, again, are the Terns: the Whiskered and Black species (*Hydrochelidon hybrida* and *H. nigra*) breed in colonies both in the open marisma and on the lagoons of the Coto Doñana, building their nests far out on the lilies and floating water-weeds. All these lay three eggs, those of the Whiskered Tern mostly greenish with black spots, a few olive-brown. The eggs of the Black Tern are much

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smaller, and of a rich liver-brown, heavily blotched with black. The larger Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna anglica*) breeds only on the islets of the marisma. I obtained their eggs, and those of the Lesser Tern (*S. minuta*) on my first visit on the 23rd of May.

These islands which we have just described lay some six or eight miles from the low shores of the marisma, and at that distance no land whatever was in sight. The *coup d'œil* therefrom presented an extraordinary scene of desolation. The only relief from the monotony of endless wastes of water were the birds. A shrieking, clamouring crowd hung overhead, while only a few yards away the surface was dotted with troops of stilts sedately stalking about, knee-deep—in no other situation do their long legs permit them to feed. Further away large flights of smaller waders flashed—now white, now dark,—in the sunlight. Most of these were ring-dotterels, dunlins, and curlew-sandpiper, the two latter in full summer-plumage A marsh-harrier, oologically inclined, was being bullied and chased by a score of peewits: and now and then a little string of ducks high overhead would still remind one of winter. Beyond all these, the strange forms of hundreds of flamingoes met one's eye in every direction—some in groups or in dense masses, others with rigidly outstretched necks and legs flying in short strings, or larger flights "glinting" in the sunshine like a pink cloud. Many pairs of old red birds were observed to be accompanied by a single white (immature) one. But the most extraordinary effect was produced by the more distant herds, the immense numbers of which formed an almost unbroken white horizon—a thin white line separating sea and sky round a great part of the circle.

But this chapter is long enough, and we must reserve for another the rest of our experiences among the flamingoes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WILD CAMELS IN EUROPE.

An incident occurred during our exploration of the marismas in the spring of 1883 which illustrates the desolate and unknown character of these wildernesses, and also brought to light a curious fact in natural history. Far away on the level plain I noticed two large animals evidently watching me. They were certainly not deer, which in spring often wander out into the marisma, but never so far as to where I then was. They stood too high on their legs for deer, and had a much greater lateral width as they stood facing me—their contour, in fact, somewhat resembled a couple of the long-stemmed, conical-topped, stone-pines, which are so characteristic of the adjoining woodlands. But there was something in their appearance even at the distance that prompted an attempt to reach closer quarters—there was a distinct *game-look* about them. I changed my cartridge for ball, and attempted an approach with all available caution, lying flat in the saddle and advancing obliquely by long "tacks," besides using the *patero's*, or native duck-shooter's, device of stopping at intervals to give the horse an appearance of grazing. But it was no use: while still a quarter of a mile away, the strangers simultaneously wheeled about and made off with shambling gait. Then for the first time, when their broadsides were exposed to view, I saw that they were two camels, one much larger than the other.* Probably no one who reads this will be more surprised than was the

* From the dates subsequently given, it would appear that the young camels are produced about the month of February, or perhaps earlier.

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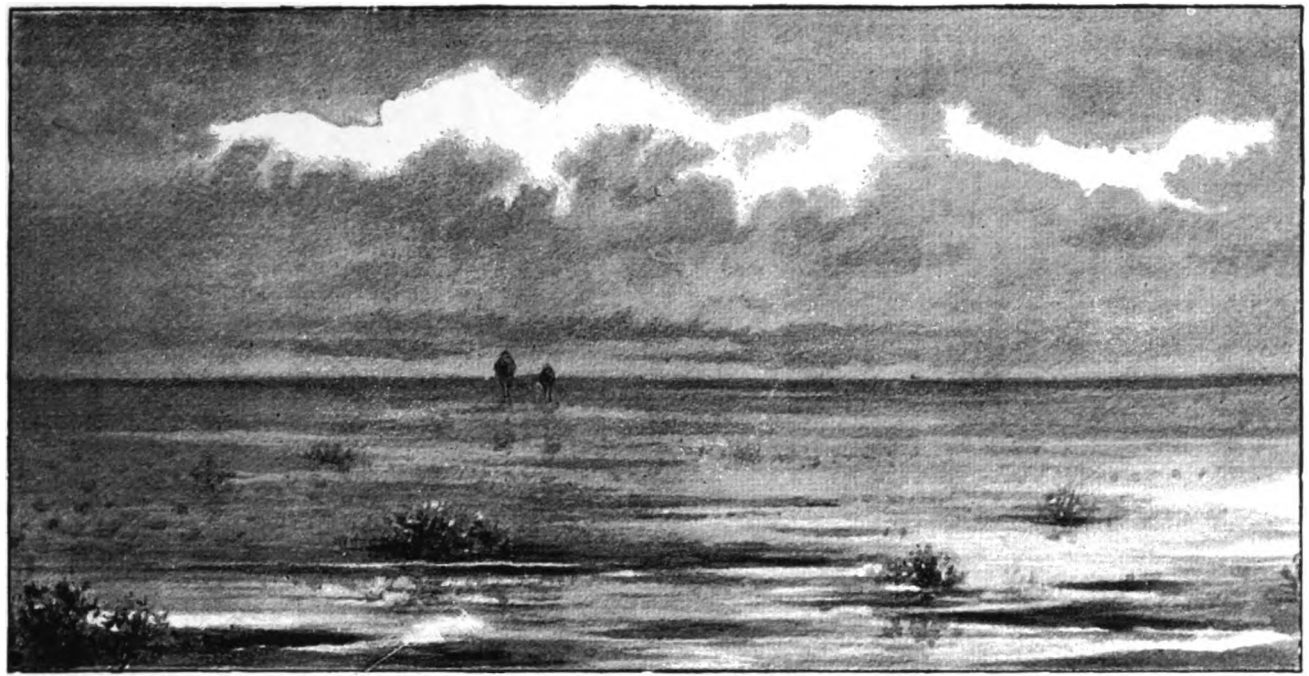

Plate XVI. THE SPANISH WILD CAMELS—OUR FIRST SIGHT OF A PAIR IN THE MARISMA. Page 94.

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writer at the apparition of the long-legged, long-necked, hump-backed pair; but there was no room for mistake, for a camel is like nothing else in creation.

The camels appeared to have no great pace, and for some distance I pursued them, but it was hopeless. Between us lay an *arroyo*, one of those wide stagnant channels that in spring intersect the dry parts of the marisma in all directions; and before getting clear of this, splashing through some hundred yards of mud and water, the bactrians were far away, scudding across a dead-level plain that extended to the horizon.

I had heard on my first visit to this wilderness (in 1872) of the existence of camels therein, and that they had lived there wild for forty years or more, but was as incredulous as perhaps some of our present readers may be, and as some certainly were when I first mentioned the fact in the *Ibis*, in January, 1884, though then corroborated by Mr. Howard Saunders, one of the joint-editors, in the following foot-note:—"I saw a small herd of these feral camels in the Coto de Doñana, on the 3rd of May, 1868; but, finding that my statement as to the breeding of the crane in that neighbourhood was received with much incredulity, I kept the apparition of the camels to myself. I possessed the eggs of the crane to convince the sceptics, but I could not have produced a camel." Shortly afterwards the statement was somewhat contemptuously criticized by an anonymous writer in *The Field*, who claimed to be himself acquainted with the marismas, and ridiculed the idea of camels existing there in a wild state. "The startling statement," wrote *Inhlwati*, "as to the existence of wild camels in the neighbourhood of Seville or Lebrija has taken me and my friends who know that country well by utter surprise; and that camels should have been roaming about there and breeding, so to speak, as perfectly wild animals in a state of nature, seems to us utterly incredible.

"The marismas in the summer time are covered with cattle, and of course they are accompanied everywhere by their herdsmen; and, so to speak, every foot of open ground

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is more or less under daily inspection. And, as the camel is a grazing animal, it would naturally be found in the more open parts of these marismas or marshes, where they could hardly have avoided detection and, as a certain consequence, capture or death for so long a period as you mention.

"So valuable an animal would be such a prize to the poor Spanish peasants, that they would turn out to a man to obtain it; and there are, besides, too many English sportsmen at Seville and Jerez to allow the chance of so novel a chase to slip through their hands unnoticed.

"I may mention that a company is in existence for the drainage and better utilization of these marismas of Lebrija, and I can hardly imagine that such animals as camels could have escaped the notice of their surveyors and staff during their detailed surveys of the district.

"I may add, that my friend, the Belgian Consul at Seville, happens to be with me now, and quite agrees with what I have said. It would be very interesting if you could obtain any further news about these strange wanderers."

To this the following foot-note was appended by the Editor of *The Field*:—"It is somewhat strange that our correspondent should ask for further information respecting animals whose existence he regards as 'utterly incredible.' But the statement has not been made that there are wild camels anywhere near Seville. The districts explored by Mr. Abel Chapman are far removed from human habitation, and are not those in which herds of domestic cattle are ever seen. The fact that Mr. Chapman described for the first time the singular nests of the flamingo, which exists there in colonies, that have never before been figured [see next chapter], proves that neither *Inhlwati* nor his friend can know the country well, and that 'every foot of ground' cannot possibly, as he states, 'be open to daily inspection.' The fact that the camels have been observed on different occasions by two well-known naturalists—men trained to the close and accurate observation of animals, who both give their names—should have entitled their remarks to a different reception."

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We have inserted the above extracts in full partly because they are a good example of the reckless way some people are prone to rush into print, and who, because they may have some acquaintance with a subject, think they are thereby entitled to speak as with complete knowledge. The marismas of Lebrija are, as a matter of fact, many miles away on the other side of the Guadalquivir.

No doubt it is a "startling statement" that wild camels are roaming at large in Europe, or anywhere else—it would hardly seem more incredible if a herd of hippopotami were reported in the Upper Thames. The camel has never within historic times been known to exist in a wild state: it has always been the servant of man, a beast of burden and domesticity.* More than this, a certain physical disability or cause has been alleged to exist, which, if correct, would render their permanent continuance, in a natural state, an impossibility. Nor could any region be well conceived so ill-adapted—indeed repulsive—to the known habits and requirements of an animal always associated with arid sandy deserts, as the Spanish marismas, which, always marshy, are subject to actual inundation during six months out of the twelve.

The discussion had, at any rate, the merit of evoking the following additional information respecting the Spanish camels, their introduction and habits. First I will quote a letter from my co-author, dated from the Coto Doñana, March 1st. "Dear Chapman,—Your letter has reached me here, where we are shooting deer for the last time this season. I am glad I happened to be on the spot, having an opportunity of asking the *guardas* and others for the facts respecting the camels, which I hope will be sufficient to convince the sceptics of their existence here and of the truth of your observation, which I am surprised to hear has been called in question.

"The camels were brought here first from the Canary Isles by Domingo Castellanos, *Administrador* to the Marques

* With the possible exception of those stated to have been discovered in the Kum-tagh deserts of Central Asia by Col. Prejevalsky, the Russian explorer.

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de Villa Franca, in 1829, he intending to make use of them in the Coto for transporting timber, charcoal, &c. The descendants of this Domingo, the two brothers Barrera of Almonte, now own the fifty or sixty animals which make the marisma lying between the Coto proper and the Guadalquivir their feeding-ground. They seldom appear on the wooded parts, remaining winter and summer in the marisma, moving with the greatest ease in winter through the mud and water, from one island to another, occasionally coming to the woods to pasture on the tops of the young pines.

"You know, from your flamingo experiences, how vast a waste is comprised between the borders of the Coto and the river (Guadalquivir) which accounts for the camels being seldom seen except by herdsmen and others (Mr. Abel Chapman, to wit) whose business may take them out into the watery wilderness. Manuel Ruiz, *conocedor* of the Villa-Vilviestre herd,* now tells me that at about three-quarters of a league from the Cerro-Trigo he saw yesterday three females with their young, which he judged to be about twenty days old.

"I can send you any further particulars required, and if the unbelievers will not swallow your camel, we must do what Mr. Saunders did with the doubted specimen [of the crane's egg], and bring before them a Spanish-born camel, hump and all. Nothing is easier. Sport pretty good so far—five stags, four pigs, two lynxes."

We are also kindly privileged to quote the following statement of Lord Lilford's personal observation of the wild camels:—"I was not aware till I saw Saunders' note at the end of your paper and read the subsequent correspondence in *The Field*, that any one doubted the existence of camels in a virtually wild state in the marisma. I once saw four or five of them together at a vast distance, and, in 1872, came across their 'spoor' several times when exploring the marismas of the Coto. Their existence is perfectly well known to many people at San Lucar, and,

* Wild-bred cattle, many of them destined for the bull-rings of Jerez or Seville.

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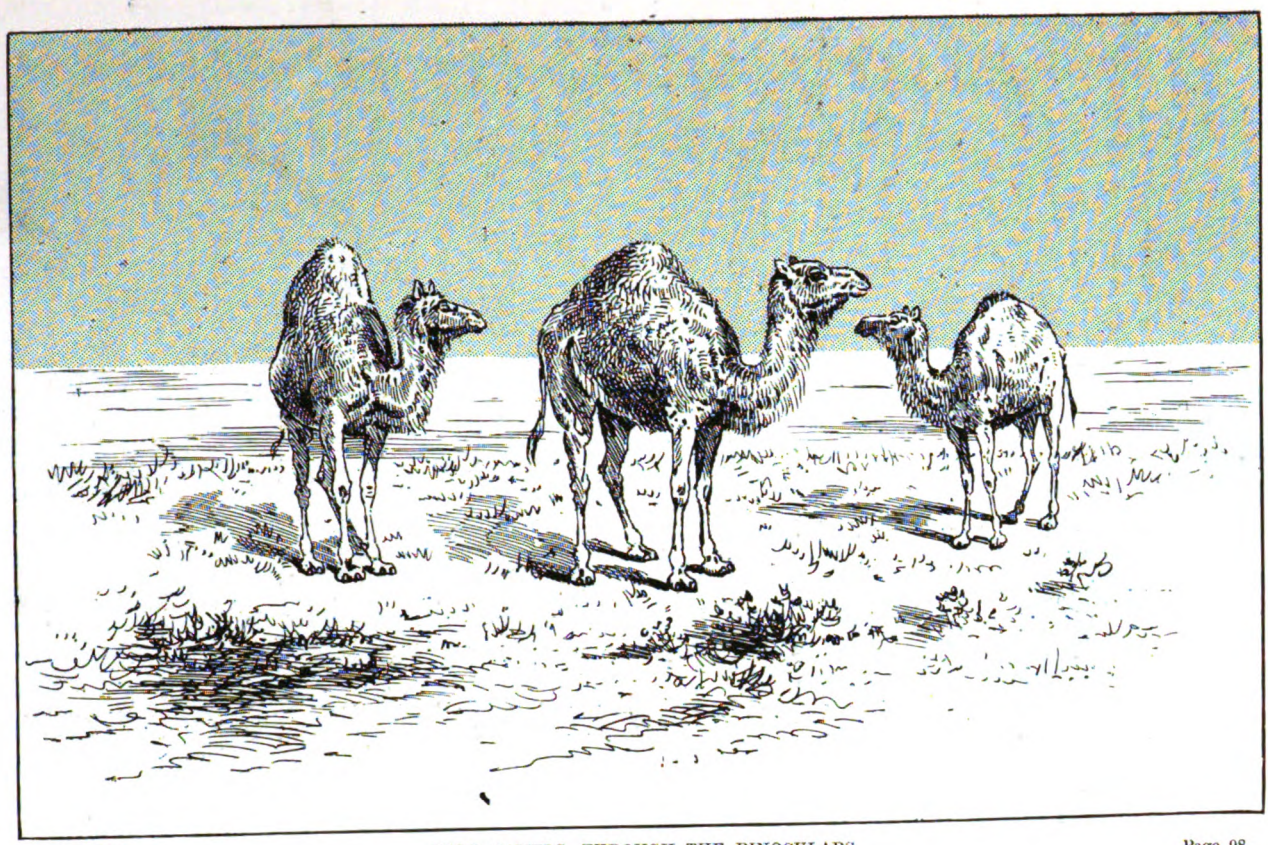

Plate XVII. WILD CAMELS—THROUGH THE BINOCULARS. Page 98.

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no doubt, also at Jerez. I heard of them first in 1856. . . . What Mr. Buck says of the habits of the camel is, as far as I can remember, pretty much what I heard from several of the *guardas* of the Coto in 1872. . . . My son reminds me of what I had quite forgotten, viz., that he and our doctor saw some camels in the marisma somewhere on the proper right of the western branch of the Guadalquivir last May (1883), when I was confined to my ship by an attack of gout in the right hand."

Lastly, we quote the following from a "Catalogue of the Mammalia of Andalucia," by Don Antonio Machado y Nuñez, published at Seville in 1869:—"The first camels, which were introduced with the object of breeding them, came from the Canary Islands, and in a few years became a herd of about eighty. In 1833, a few years after introduction, they were used as beasts of burden and transport in the province of Cadiz, employed in the carriage of materials used in making the high road from Port St. Mary to San Lucar de Barrameda (more than thirty years ago), and also in conveyances to Arcos, Jerez, Chichlana, and other towns. But some untoward accidents on the roads through horses being frightened at the sight of such strange animals,* and the necessity of separating them from horses in the yards, combined with other matters easy to remedy, caused them to fall into disuse as beasts of burden and carriage, and thus the economy and advantages obtained by their introduction were lost. They were then used for agricultural purposes, and some lands which Don Rafael de Barrera holds are at this time (1869) cultivated by the aid of camels, which are used for ploughing and other agricultural work."

* The repugnance evinced by horses towards the camel was known ages ago. At the battle of Sardis (B.C. 546) this equine weakness was utilized by Cyrus in opposing to the Lydian cavalry a vanguard of camels (Herodotus, Clio, pp. 78, 80). A similar stratagem was proposed by Amurath I. at the decisive battle of Kossova between the Ottoman army and the Confederate hosts of Servia, Bosnia, and Wallachia, August 27th, 1389, but was abandoned in deference to the fiery impetuosity of Prince Bajazet and some supposed precepts of the Koran.

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At the present time the descendants of these camels live and flourish in the marismas in a wholly wild state, and since the sequestration of the Messrs. Barrera are practically ownerless.

We have fallen in with them on several subsequent occasions. On January 6th, 1888, we descried a herd of nineteen, of various sizes, all dreamily ruminating, knee-deep in the marisma, each form reflected in the still water beneath. Our whole shooting-party (including seven or eight Englishmen) enjoyed the sight, the herd remaining in view during the half-hour we spent at lunch on the edge of the marisma. With powerful field-glasses we brought the camels close up, and watched them putting their heads down as though grazing on the grasses beneath the surface. Presently they moved on to a rushy islet some three miles from the shore: hard by stood a rosy troop of flamingoes, and the intervening waters were dotted with numberless fleets of ducks and geese. It was a unique spectacle, one that could hardly be matched outside this out-of-the-world corner of Europe.

In 1890, and again several times in the spring of 1891, we fell in with camels. On March 5th we rode within 500 yards of eight, two of which were about the size of sheep. In appearance they are very shaggy beasts, and vary much in colour, some being of a light tawny hue, while others are very dark brown, but all seem *grey* about the neck.

On one of these occasions a curious incident occurred. It was in December, 1890—an intensely cold and dry season, almost unprecedented in Spain for the severity of the frost—when, in mid-marisma, leagues from water or covert, and specially on the look-out for camels, a keen eye detected in the far distance a roving fox. All dismounted, and letting the horses graze, hid behind them and awaited his approach. Then, with only a single *podenco*, or hunting-dog, *Frascuelo* by name, and after a straight-away chase of five or six miles at top-speed over a sun-dried plain, bare and level as a billiard-table, we fairly rode bold Reynard down, and killed him.

As evidence of the "staying powers" of the camel, our

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friend Antonio Trujillo tells us that some years ago he came on one stuck in a bog. For six days he was unable to reach the spot, and daily watched the poor beast helplessly floundering. On the seventh day he found it possible to assist the camel to escape. All around within reach of the poor creature's mouth, he found that the very earth was eaten away. Yet when helped to regain firm ground, the camel walked quietly away, apparently but little the worse, and was soon browsing heartily on the tops of some young pine-trees.

It is, perhaps, worth adding, in reference to the antipathy shown by horses towards camels, that when during the night bands of the latter have occasionally strayed from the marismas to the vicinity of our shooting-lodge of Doñana, at once a commotion has broken out in the stables, though placed in an enclosed square. All at once the horses have begun shrieking, kicking, and displaying every sign of fear, which could only be explained by their detecting the effluvia of some passing camels.

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CHAPTER IX.

AMONG THE FLAMINGOES.

NOTES ON THEIR HAUNTS AND HABITS, AND THE DISCOVERY OF THEIR "INCUNABULA."

THOUGH Flamingoes are found in many of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, and their rosy battalions are familiar to Eastern travellers through Egypt and the Suez Canal, yet their mode of nesting, and especially the manner in which birds of so singular a form could dispose of their extremely long legs while incubating, has remained an unsettled question. Till within the last decade, in default of more recent observations, sundry ancient fables have passed current. Dampier described the nests of flamingoes seen by him two hundred years ago—in September, 1683—on one of the Cape de Verde Islands, as being high conical mounds of mud upon which the female sat astride ("Voyages," i., pp. 70, 71); and for two centuries this cavalier position has been accepted as history, no further observations having been made, though

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flamingoes have nested irregularly in various parts of Europe—even in France (in the marshy Camargue, the delta of the Rhone), and in Southern Spain.

In the latter country several efforts have been made by naturalists to obtain more precise knowledge of the breeding habits of the flamingo, especially by Lord Lilford and Mr. Howard Saunders, but, from various causes, without definite results. "The heat on those plains in June, when the flamingoes are said to nest," wrote the latter, "is something tropical, and it is no joke to wander for days over a district as large as our 'Eastern Counties,' on the *chance* of stumbling upon a colony of flamingoes somewhere or other." The element of chance, however, is a potent factor, and it eventually fell to the writer's lot to discover that for which other and better naturalists had sought in vain. The following is a narrative of our explorations in the marisma in the spring of 1883:—

The first encounter with flamingoes that year had a somewhat ludicrous result: after riding all day across the wastes, we had arrived towards sunset within sight of our quarters for the night, when a herd of these birds was observed feeding in a reed-girt creek. They seemed unusually favourably placed for a stalk—for these wary fowl seldom approach within shot of the slightest covert; but on reaching the outermost rushes, the pack was seen to be at a hopeless range, and rose immediately on my appearance. To my surprise, a "treble A" wire-cartridge nevertheless dropped four—three falling direct to the shot, and a fourth "towering" and falling dead a little further out. One tall fellow was only winged, and seeing that he was walking right away from me, and getting into deeper water, Felipe took my horse and rode round to cut him out. Meanwhile the short twilight was over, and darkness overtook us some distance out in the dreary marisma. In the gloom I mistook the bearings, and only, after splashing about for a time that seemed eternal, managed to reach the shore, laden with three huge birds, wet through, hungry, and hopelessly lost. For a mile or two I struggled on through thorn and tangled brushwood,

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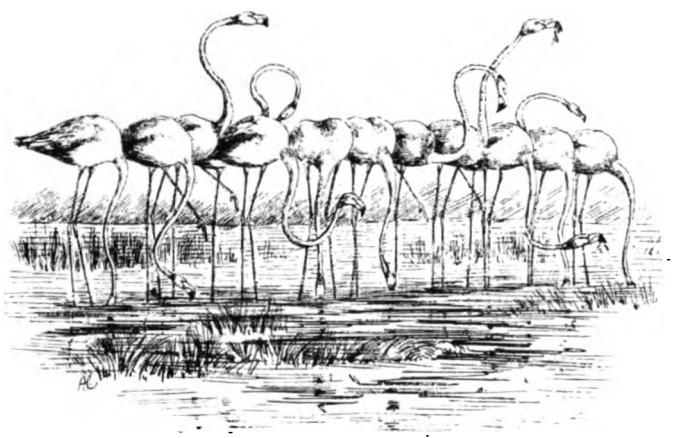
till at last, coming suddenly upon a herd of sleeping beasts —bulls, for all I could tell—I gave it up, and decided to weather out the night in the jungle, with the sand for a couch, and a flamingo for a pillow. Great was the relief, about midnight, to hear a distant shot; I responded with a fusillade, and shortly afterwards B——, with Felipe, and Trujillo's mighty frame loomed through the darkness, and the duress was at an end.

During the month of April we searched the marisma systematically for the breeding-places of the flamingoes: but though we explored a large area, riding many leagues



FLAMINGOES ON FEED.

in all directions from our base through mud and water, varying from a few inches to three or even four feet in depth, yet we could see, at this season, no sign of nests. Flamingoes there were in plenty, together with ducks, divers, waders, and many kinds of aquatic birds already described: but the water was still too deep—the mud-flats and new-born islets not sufficiently dried for purposes of nidification, and as far as we could see the only species which had actually commenced to lay were the purple herons, coots, Kentish plovers, peewits, and some others.

Of the flamingoes themselves we secured several more

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lovely specimens; during two mornings devoted to shooting them, we bagged eight, six adults in rich rosy plumage, and two immature. Flamingoes are always shy and watchful birds, and their great height gives them a commanding view of threatening dangers: but there are degrees in intensity of wildness, and despite the unquestionable difficulty of flamingo-shooting, we would certainly not place these long-necked birds in the first rank among impracticable wild-fowl. Wild geese, for example, many of the duck-tribe, and nearly all the larger raptores far exceed them in incessant vigilance and downright astuteness. Flamingoes, however, will not, as a rule, permit of approach by the ordinary Spanish method of the stalking-horse, or *cabresto:* while the treacherous pony is still two gunshots away, the warning croak of the sentries is given, and at once the whole herd start to walk away, opening out their ranks as they move off. The method we found most effective to secure them was by partially surrounding a herd with a line of mounted men, who rode far out beyond them and then drove them over our two guns, each concealed behind his horse and crouching knee-deep in water. Of all the dirty work that wild-fowling in its many forms necessitates, this flamingo-driving takes the palm. It is mud-larking pure and simple, man, horse, and gun alike encased in a clinging argillaceous covering like the street-Arab amphibians below London Bridge.

It is a fine sight to see a big flight of flamingoes, say five hundred, coming well in to the gun—*entrando bien á la escopeta!* The whole sky is streaked with columns of strange forms, and the still air resounds with the babel of discordant croaks and cries. How wondrously they marshal those long uniform files, bird behind bird without break or confusion, and how precisely do those thousand black wing-points beat in rapid regular unison! Flamingoes are not "hard" birds: their feathers being loose and open, and the extremely long necks a specially vulnerable part, they may be brought down from a considerable height even with small shot. One evening, while collecting specimens of small birds on the open marsh, the writer

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killed a pretty right-and-left at flamingoes with No 6. Happening to see them on the wing a long way off, I lay down flat among the low samphire-scrub and presently had them (five) right overhead. Both these birds fell stone-dead. On another occasion, many years before, at the Veta Lengua, our four barrels, each loaded with nine treble-nesting slugs, brought down three fine flamingoes from a herd rising at upwards of 180 measured paces. But having obtained specimens, we did not further molest these singular birds.

A RIGHT-AND-LEFT AT FLAMINGOES.

Flamingoes were not the sole attraction: the desolate region around abounded with wild life, furred and feathered, and many a pleasant bye-day was put in among the "vermin." One morning we rode out to some distant thickets where a neighbouring herdsman—half peasant, half poacher—complained that a family of lynxes were working havoc among his kids. Our friend, a man of square iron-knit frame, with the eyes and claws of an eagle, rode before us, no less than eleven wire-haired *podencos* (hunting-dogs) made fast to his saddle-bow by cords of twisted esparto. The first thicket tried held a lynx, which, disturbed by the *podencos*, bolted at speed

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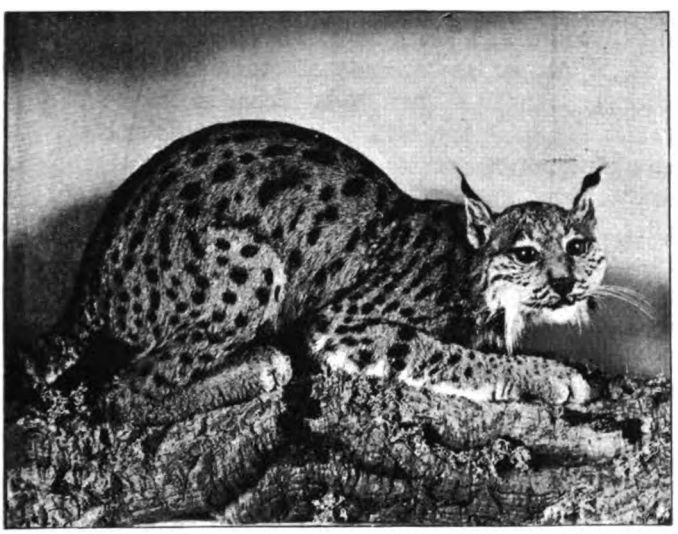
right between us and rolled over with a dose of "treble A" about her lugs. From this one small *mancha* the dogs put out, besides the lynx, several partridge and rabbits, a Montagu's harrier, and a pair of mallards! This lynx was a female, a full-grown and handsome example of *Felis pardina*, much infested (as are most of the scrub-haunting animals) with ticks, especially about the head: but it was not much more than half the size of an enormous male



SPANISH LYNX.

which we subsequently found. Unluckily, half our pack were then wasting their energies on a big boar, which, after trotting close up to where the writer stood, turned back with a valedictory grunt and disappeared. The rest of the pack had meanwhile driven the lynx to the outside of the thicket, where we had already viewed him and regarded his fate as sealed; when, with sudden fury, the big cat turned on his foes, and scattering the *podencos* with some tremendous fore-arm blows, made good his escape to the fastnesses of the Algaida de la Pez.

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Some years afterwards the writer killed a magnificent male lynx, one of the largest and most beautifully marked we have ever seen, at this *mancha*—probably the same beast.

These scrub-clad plains abounded with tall grey foxes (*Vulpes melanogaster*) and mongoose (*Herpestes widdringtoni*), with genets, badgers, and wild-cats, of all of which we shot specimens. Three wild-cats we bagged by moonlight, from screens placed to command an open glade where rabbits are wont to pursue nocturnal gambols. Waiting in ambush beneath the star-strewn heavens, in the silent brilliance of the southern night, no sound save the churring of nightjars, or the whistle of stone-curlew, broke the stillness: bats and small owls flicker in uncertain flight against the dark sky, and across the glade rabbits glide like phantoms: presently a larger shadow announces their deadly enemy, the *Gato montés*. Two of these wild-cats were males, large and powerful brutes, weighing 9½ and 10¼ lbs. respectively, and tinged with warm chestnut colours beneath. The big lynx we could not weigh, being beyond the limit of the spring-balance. He probably reached near half a hundredweight. But we must return to our flamingoes.

During the month of April, as already mentioned, all efforts to discover their breeding-places proved futile. It was clearly too early in the season, and the writer now lost nearly a week through a smart attack of ague, brought on by constant splashing about in comparatively cold water with a fierce sun always beating down on one's head. In May, however, we had better luck. Further to the eastward flamingoes had always been most numerous, and once or twice we observed signs, early in May, that looked like the first rude beginnings of architecture. We have already described the archipelago of islets that lay far towards the eastern shore, and on which we had found the rare gulls, and such a variety of waders and other aquatic birds breeding (p. 93), together with the immense numbers of flamingoes that lined the horizon. We must now return to those bird-islets, to the scene where we broke off at the end of Chapter VII. on the afternoon of the 9th of May.

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As there stated, the immense aggregations of flamingoes in those middle marismas, surrounded the horizon in an almost unbroken line. But, on examining the different herds narrowly with the binocular, there was an obvious dissimilarity in the appearance of certain groups. One or two in particular seemed so much denser than the others: the narrow white line appeared at least three times as thick, and in the centre looked as if the birds were literally piled upon each other. Felipe suggested that these birds must be at their *pajeréra*, or breeding-place, and after a long wet ride we found this was

A TOILET IN THE WILDERNESS.

so. The water was very deep, the bottom clinging mud: at intervals, for a hundred yards or so, the laboured plunging of the mule was exchanged for an easier, gliding motion—he was swimming. The change was a welcome relief to man and beast: the sensation of sitting a swimming animal is not unpleasant, but it will give some idea of the labours undergone in these aquatic rides in the marismas in May, 1883, if we add that a fine mule, a powerful beast worth £60, succumbed to the effects of the fortnight's work.

On a nearer approach, the cause of the peculiar

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appearance of the herd from a distance became clearly discernible. Many of the birds were sitting down on a low mud-island. Some were standing upon it: and others again were standing in the water. Thus the different elevations of their bodies formed what had appeared a triple or quadruple line.

On reaching the spot we found a perfect mass of nests. The low, flat, mud plateau was crowded with them as thickly as its space permitted. These nests had little or no height above the flat surface of mud—some were raised an inch or two, a few might be five or six inches in height; but the majority were merely circular bulwarks of mud barely raised above the general level, and having the impression of the bird's legs distinctly marked upon them. The general aspect of the plateau was not unlike a large table covered with plates. In the centre was a deep hole full of muddy water, which, from the gouged appearance of its sides, appeared to be used as a reservoir for nest-making materials.

Scattered all round this main colony were numerous single nests, rising out of the water and evidently built up from the bottom. Here and there two or three of these were joined together—"semi-detached," so to speak: these separate nests stood six or eight inches above water-level, and as the depth was rather over a foot, the total height of the nests would be some two feet or thereabouts, and their width across the hollow top some fifteen inches. None of these nests as yet contained any eggs, and though I returned to the *pajaréra* on the latest day I was in its neighbourhood (May 11th) they still remained empty. On both occasions many hundreds of flamingoes were sitting on the nests, and on the 11th we had a good view of them at close quarters. Linked arm-in-arm with Felipe, and crouching low on the water to look as little human as possible, we approached within some seventy yards before their sentries showed signs of alarm: and at that distance, with the glass, observed the sitting birds as distinctly as one need wish. The long red legs doubled under their bodies, the knees projecting as far as, or beyond the tail,

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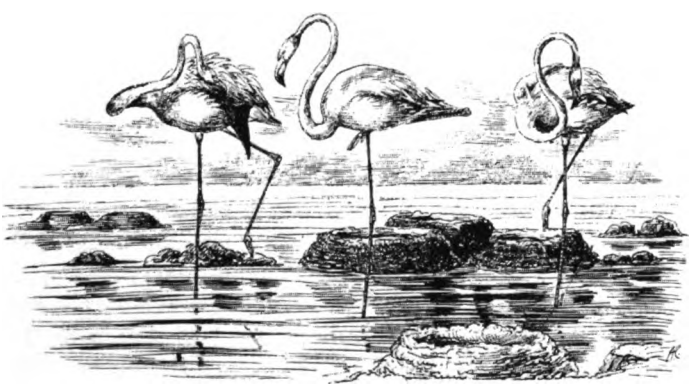
and their graceful necks neatly curled away among their back-feathers like a sitting swan, with the heads resting on their breasts—all these points were unmistakable. Indeed, as regards the disposition of their legs, it is hardly necessary to point out that in the great majority of cases (the nests being hardly raised above the level of the mud) no other position was possible—to sit *astride* on a *flat* surface is out of the question.

Still none of the crowded nests contained a single egg. How strange it is that the flamingo, a bird which never seems happy unless half-way up to his knees in water,



FLAMINGOES AND NESTS.

should so long delay the period of incubation: for, long before eggs could be laid and hatched in these nests and the young reared, the full summer-heats of June and July would have set in, the water would have entirely disappeared, and the flamingoes would be left stranded in the midst of a scorching desert of dry, sun-baked mud.

Being unable myself to return to the marisma, I sent Felipe back there on the 26th of May, when he obtained eggs—long, white and chalky, some specimens extremely rough. Two is the number laid in each nest. In 1872 the writer obtained eggs taken on May 24th, which is therefore, probably, about the average date of laying.

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Owing to the late period at which incubation takes place, we have not had an opportunity of examining the young flamingoes when newly-hatched, or of endeavouring to solve the biological problems which appear to cluster round their adolescent anatomy. In June and July, 1872, the writer spent some time in the marisma, but unfortunately was not aware, at that time, of the interest attaching to these points.

According to native accounts, very few young flamingoes are ever reared in Spain. Though in wet seasons eggs are laid in thousands (they are sold by boatloads in the neighbouring villages), yet few, if any, of the young Spanish flamingoes reach maturity—possibly by reason of their lateness in nesting, and the rapid changes in the state of the water in the marisma.

In the spring of 1891, after an exceptionally severe winter in Spain, and with comparatively little water in the marisma, flamingoes were remarkably scarce, and we believe that none bred in Andalucia that year.

Since the author's description of the nesting habits of the flamingo first appeared in the *Ibis* (January, 1884), its accuracy has been corroborated by independent observations made on the West Indian island of Abaco by His Excellency (now Sir) H. H. Blake, when Governor of the Bahamas. The value of the corroboration is enhanced by the fact that the above-named gentleman was unaware at the time he wrote that the long-vexed question had already, three years previously, been solved: and his graphic description in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1887, is, as regards facts, almost identical with the present writer's account of a similar scene narrated in the *Ibis* for January, 1884.

One other point before we leave the flamingo and its haunts. We have seen it stated that the brilliant colours of the flamingo do but reflect the brilliancy of its environment—that these bright colours have been acquired through the æsthetic tastes of the bird and by "selective preference"; then, proceeding to enlarge on a "fascinating theory," its expounder goes on from particular

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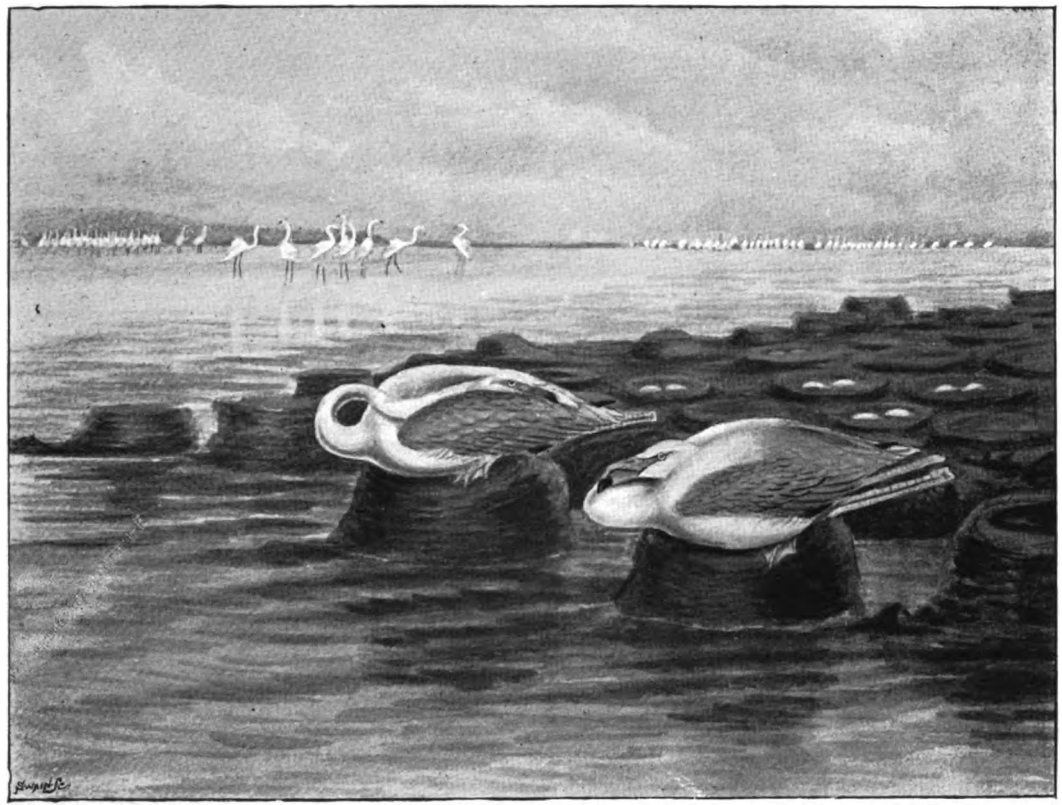

Plate XVIII. FLAMINGOES ON THEIR NESTS. Page 112.

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to general, and to demonstrate that this Darwinian principle is generally operative in ornithic coloration. Whether birds in general have or have not æsthetic tastes in the matter of coloration or ornament, we are not prepared to say: but to our less imaginative minds it is a question whether there exists in nature a shred of real evidence in support of such a hypothesis. The flamingo truly has a brilliant plumage, but *never* a brilliant environment. No one who has been intimately acquainted with these birds in their haunts could have conceived such a sentiment; for anything less brilliant than the bleak and tawny monotony which characterizes the chosen homes of the flamingo it would be impossible to imagine. The flamingo itself, indeed, is the one solitary speck of pure bright colour amidst the broad leagues of mud and muddy water which it so conspicuously ornaments. Other birds are there, it is true, but to them the same remark applies. They, also, are as bright, pure and conspicuously different from their environment as are the flamingoes. What more exquisite examples of bright, spotless beauty amidst strongly contrasted surroundings than the stilts and avocets, the lovely southern herons, egrets and spoonbills, the gulls and marsh-terns? These are but a handful of examples fatal to such a theory, and they could easily be multiplied indefinitely.

That many brilliant bird-forms affect brilliant surroundings, that the fauna of the cold and colourless north in general lacks the gorgeous hues of certain denizens of the tropics, or, again, that many creatures possess hues assimilated to the general tone of their destined haunts—all these are *facts* which we readily recognize. But are such facts much more than coincidences? Or is it wise to deduce any binding rules or axiom therefrom? As regards protective assimilation in colour, that is quite a different thing: its advantages are self-evident, and its application more or less universal throughout the animal-world, but it is hardly to the point. Protective coloration we recognize and understand—it is an every-day phenomenon—but æsthetic tastes in colour we utterly reject.

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The composition of the human mind is undoubtedly speculative: and to those of deep thought, as distinguished from others the bent of whose energies tends rather towards action, the temptation to theorize—to venture on the dangerous regions of inference and deduction—appears irresistible. The contemplative thinker formulates theories the apparent beauty of which fascinate his imagination. Collateral evidence which seems to substantiate, is, in general, not difficult to find—that of a negative or prejudicial character is not sought. Then with a mind unconsciously biassed in favour of a preconceived idea, it may happen that probabilities are mistaken for facts, evidence for proof: and thus a new hypothesis is duly launched, based on ten, fifty, or a hundred adduced circumstances, the whole of which may be merely coincidences, and exceptions to the rule if applied to the millions of unadduced cases, and perhaps, even in relation to the particular examples cited, of no direct bearing in the sense in which it is sought to apply them.

As an example of the class of theories alluded to, we have read that the colours of the sea-gull tribe are dark above and light below in order, on the one hand, that they may escape the searching scrutiny of the eagle soaring above, and, on the other, avoid alarming their finny prey beneath. If there was anything in this idea, it would, at least, be a hard case for those sea-birds not so coloured, and it should be added that of the birds which *are* so coloured several species take three or four years to attain adult dress. How do they survive those earlier years? But a very slight acquaintance with the subjects in life shows that there is actually nothing in it. Lying in one's gunning-punt, the whitest-breasted gulls, as viewed from below against the lightest of cloud backgrounds, are seen as clearly as if the bird's colour was actually black. Every detail of form and movement is clearly distinguishable—the clean-cut wings and tail, legs pressed close up under the latter, the pointed head turning from side to side as it searches the waters. Its colour makes no difference, and is no factor at all. Then from high above, from the heights

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of a sea-cliff, what man of even moderate vision cannot distinguish with equal ease the movements of the black-backed gull from those of the pale herring-gull and paler tern? And both eagles and surface-swimming fish are infinitely keener of vision than the sharpest-eyed of our kind.

These remarks are penned from no love of argument, nor inspired by invidious motive, but simply with a view to get at *facts* and thereby advance the interests of science: that is, of true knowledge.

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CHAPTER X.

BRIGANDAGE IN SPAIN.

SKETCHES OF TWO ROBBER-TYPES.

I.—Vizco el Borje.

The existence of the brigand, it would appear, is desirable in order to cast a glamour of heroism over the adventures of travellers in foreign lands. Many Peninsular tourists mention encounters with "brigands," and according to some books on Spanish travel, their authors were frequently experiencing hair-breadth escapes from these gentry, who were, of course, bristling as to their persons with deadly weapons—as is, in fact, nearly every harmless peasant or goatherd one may meet in the wilds. The tendency to overcolour is, perhaps, natural to imaginative writers; but it is a mistake to rush to the other extreme, and to deny *in toto* the survival of this fraternity in modern Spain.

In his "Gatherings from Spain"—one of the best books ever written—Ford draws a picture of Spanish brigandage, actual and imaginary, and diagnoses the whole status of these "men of the road," as it existed in his day, with a knowledge and terseness that cannot be excelled. And although Ford wrote fifty years ago, yet his remarks stand substantially correct at the present day; the only change of importance being that measure of reclamation which half a century of equal laws has succeeded in effecting in the prowling *gitano* or gypsy, in Ford's day a lawless pariah, the curse of rural Spain.

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Though nowadays the traveller may, and probably would, traverse Iberia in every direction without personal molestation, yet the race of José Maria, the Jack Sheppard of the Peninsula, whose safe-conduct was more effective than that of his king, is not extinct, though, like other rapacious animals, his home is now confined to mountain-fastnesses, whence he only emerges to seize by a sudden *coup* some opportunity for plunder, of which his satellites have sent him notice—for, by profuse generosity and terrorism, the *ladron en grande* holds the sparse hill-peasantry in a bond of allegiance.

Putting on one side the conventional and highly-coloured notions that pass current, the condition of *bandolerismo*, or brigandage, at the present day may be thus defined:—There is first the noble outlaw, or "professional" robber-king, a rare and meteoric personage, of whom anon; and there are the sneaking petty pilferers who rob as opportunity serves, or as their wild environment almost suggests. These voltigeurs of the road are normally peasants, goat-herds, or mere good-for-nothings; content to confine their energies to minor larcenies, and whose poor ambitions soar no higher than relieving solitary wayfarers of their watches, loose cash, &c., as happened to a friend of ours while traversing the sierras between Paterna and Alcalá. Though a fight is no part of these footpads' tactics, yet in favourable situations a single hidden scoundrel may command the way, and dominate a dozen travellers who know not whether that sudden summons to halt and lay down their loose goods and chattels proceeds from one or from a score of assailants, concealed amid the tumbled rocks and dense underwood of a narrow pass. And, after all, it is probably wiser, if caught in such a trap, to lose a few dollars than to risk life.

Very different is the character of the noble robber-chief, or *ladron en grande*. In this man who leads the lawless, and, by force of predominant will, controls and commands a cut-throat gang, but ill-disposed either to subjection or discipline, there are qualities that, rightly directed, might attain any object sought—qualities of moral force, courage,

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and an iron will, that one cannot but admire. Men of this calibre appear but at intervals; for "nature is chary in the production of such specimens of dangerous grandeur." Such a man was José Maria; and of late years a fine example has been afforded by the notorious outlaw, Vizco el Borje, of whose methods of procedure the following incident, as narrated to us almost in the words of its principal victim, will serve to give a good idea.

At the little mountain-village of Zahrita it is the custom to celebrate the annual festival of its patron saint, San Antonio, by an amateur bull-fight, a performance at which the smartest of the young bloods of the village take the principal parts. For many years it had been the habit of the owner of the neighbouring pasturages to provide the bulls for this annual function free of charge; and on the eve of the festival the son of the well-to-do proprietor, Don Pedro de M——, was, with his steward Diego, and a herdsman, engaged in selecting some of the most fiery and active young bulls. Both were dismounted, and, rein in hand, were walking round the herd, when they were suddenly arrested by a sharp summons to halt and surrender. Then, turning round, they found themselves face to face with the muzzles of three levelled guns bearing upon them—the three mounted men having stolen up behind and taken them unawares. Resistance under such circumstances was out of the question. The guns of both Pedro and his servant hung in their saddle-slings, but any movement in that direction would have brought instant fire upon them. Before they had well recovered from their surprise, one of the brigands coolly dismounted and took possession of both their guns, the other pair meanwhile each keeping his man well "covered." The unlucky Pedro was now completely at the mercy of his aggressors. At the order of one of these, evidently the chief, the prisoners remounted and followed his lead, the others closing in behind, and precluding all chance of escape, except at the risk—or certainty—of being shot down. The guide took a line leading towards the higher sierra, and avoiding the frequented track. Arrived in a densely close thicket, the

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cavalcade halted, and one man was sent forward to reconnoitre. A shrill whistle was heard in that direction, and presently nine other horsemen rode in. The captives were now ordered to dismount, their eyes were closely bandaged, and they were informed that their lives depended on implicit obedience to orders, and that it was better for them to see nothing and to hear less—the latter an almost unnecessary injunction, since hardly a word had been spoken. For hours the captives were led forward, their horses stumbling along a rocky ascent, and they presently knew, by the absence of brushwood, that they had reached the higher regions of the sierra; then a halt was ordered, they were assisted to dismount, and led on foot along a passage whose echoing sounds told them it was subterranean. Here, in an extensive cavern, probably the long-abandoned workings of a Roman mine, his eyes were unbandaged, and Pedro found himself in the presence of his three original assailants. The only furniture in the cave consisted of a few empty boxes; on one of these glimmered a flickering wick in a saucerful of oil. The robber-leader drew up another box for a seat, and producing writing materials, ordered Pedro to write to his dictation as follows:—"My dear father, I am in the power of sequestradores, who make good plans and bind fast. It is madness to put Government on their track—they will escape and you will lose your son. Your secrecy and money at once free me. You can send the silver by Diego, our steward, who bears you this. Let him appear on the mountain-road between Grazalema and El Bosque, riding a white donkey, and bringing ten thousand dollars." . . . . At this point the prisoner, who had so far written as directed, stopped short, and point-blank refused to demand such a sum—declaring he would not take from his brothers any part of their patrimony, and that the only sum he would accept of his father was such as might fall to him as one of a numerous family. The fairness of this, and the undaunted attitude of Pedro, seemed to please the brigand, who declared, with a shake of his hand, that whatever bargain was struck should be honourably adhered

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to. The sum of 6,000 dollars was then inserted, the missive signed and sealed, and Diego, who had remained blindfold, was led to a point in the sierra which was familiar to him, his eyes unbandaged, and told to make the best of his way with the note to Jerez. This, as the dawn was just breaking, he had no difficulty in doing before night.

After Diego's departure, the chief invited his captive to sup with him and join in a *borracha* (skin) of wine, under whose influence the bandit became more genial, and related certain facts concerning his personal history. He had formerly been an officer of *carabineros*, but being dismissed for some, as he held, trifling fault, all means of subsistence were denied to him, and losing caste step by step, there had gradually developed in his breast an intense hatred of all social arrangements, which had finally led to his present state of outlawry. First he had been a smuggler, but, as the Spanish proverb runs,—

> " De contrabandista á ladron
> No hay mas que un escalon."
> (From a smuggler to a thief
> The step is short, the time is brief.)

Little by little his revolt against law and order led him into further excesses and more outrageous acts of crime. The daring courage and character of the man had attracted rogues of lesser calibre to his side, and now Vizco el Borje was the acknowledged chief of the party of plunder and anarchy.

The following night another party of robbers arrived: the captive was again blindfolded, and the dark journey resumed. For three days and nights the same course was pursued—the brigands each morning at dawn going to ground in a fresh earth. An amusing incident occurred during one of these nocturnal marches. The cavalcade was suddenly brought to a stop, and the words passed down the line—*Civiles, civiles!* The prisoner now hoped that his deliverance was at hand; the chief ordered his band to close up their ranks—the prisoner being removed some yards to the rear—and to prepare to fire. During the

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panic, and amidst the clicking of locks, Pedro took the opportunity of slightly raising his bandage. The robbers were halted on a narrow ledge of the mountain-side—a sheer rock-wall behind and a precipitous slope below making any lateral movement impossible. A direct retreat was of course available, but this did not commend itself to the chief, who, under the shadow of the cliff, had the approaching horsemen at a disadvantage. The clatter of hoofs

CIVIL GUARDS.

sounded nearer and nearer, and as the first beast appeared on the ledge it was evident there had been a false alarm. The heavily-laden transport of a gang of smugglers advanced along the narrow track, and as they slowly filed past the robber-troop, the only words that passed were *Buenas noches!* and the reply *Vayan ustedes con Dios!* Good night, and God go with you!

On the second night Vizco had left his captive, saying he

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had other work in hand: but, a day or two afterwards, Pedro received a message from him, stating that, owing to the vigilance of the authorities, no opportunity had offered itself of meeting Diego and the white donkey at the appointed tryst: and instructing him again to write to his father, with fresh directions to forward half the stipulated ransom to Grazalema, where means would be found of receiving it—the other half to be borne by the white donkey to a freshly-appointed spot among the hills. Overjoyed at receiving this second assurance that his son still lived, the father, though an old man, set off at once, with six hundred pounds in cash, on the long ride to Grazalema. Then for two days he hung about its precipitous streets in an agony of suspense almost unendurable. No one spoke to him till the third morning, when a man leading a pony laden with the rough woollen cloth which is made in Grazalema and forms the staple industry of the little town, accosted him as he passed with the words—"Follow me." The pony was stopped before a small shop wherein some of the same woollen cloths were exposed for sale: and passing through into the small back-room, the old father found a man seated whose appearance was that of a cloth-pedlar—men who with their sturdy ponies carry on a trade or barter of these coarse woollens throughout the sierras.

After the customary Andalucian exchange of civilities, the pedlar, looking the old man straight in the face, said, "Have you the three thousand dollars? You know this?" and he produced Pedro's pencil-case. The money was at the posada, and soon the old man, ripping up the stuffing of his saddle, returned to the pedlar's shop with that sum. The money was counted out, and Vizco el Borje, springing on top of that honest-looking freight of coarse cloth, was soon clear of the streets of Grazalema and steering his pony to some well-known mountain-lair.

While these events were occurring in Grazalema poor Diego was wearying of his long-delayed assignation. For three days he and his white donkey hung about the remote spot which had been indicated: and at last, on the third

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evening, as he was entering the village of Benocaz, a goatherd said, "At the well beyond the village you will find a woman in black who will direct you to those you seek." He passed along the line of white *casitas* which form the only street of Benocaz, and by the old Moorish draw-well beyond sat a woman in black. As directed by the goatherd, he addressed her, "*Que hora es?*" and the reply, "*Las doce*," was what he had been told to expect. The woman at once struck over into the hills till she reached a well-worn track and directed Diego to follow this till accosted by a shepherd. He did as he was bidden, and after two hours' rough riding over the dark hill, heard the same words, "*Que hora es?*" "*Las doce*," he replied, and was piloted by this new guide to a cavern, in which, to his intense joy, he found his young master, alive and well. The money was at once paid over, and though at first the brigands refused to release their captive on the ground that only half the stipulated sum had been brought, yet suspense did not last long, for during the night a messenger from Vizco arrived, announcing the due payment of the other half, and instructing the robbers at once to set free their prisoners, and to place them on a road which they would know. And on the following evening, after a captivity of fifteen days, Pedro rode once more into the city of Jerez.

Since the above was written Vizco el Borje has died—died as a robber-chieftain should die, by the rifle-ball. Several times, towards the end, his life was only saved by his magnificent pluck and resource. But at last, while campaigning in the Sierra Morena, not far from Córdova, his whereabouts became known to the authorities—presumably through treachery—and after a series of desperate deeds of bravery, the bold brigand was finally surrounded, all retreat cut off, and Vizco el Borje fell with five bullets in his body.

We now give a brief history of a robber of the other type—and, incidentally, of the vagaries of judicial justice in Spain.

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II.—Agua-Dulce.

Agua-Dulce lacked the character of the noble brigand; but was so successful in a long course of perpetual petty robberies, and in invariably escaping justice when caught, that he had become a terror to the neighbourhood of Jerez. To the simple folk whose duties took them to the sequestered farmsteads or along the lonely *veredas*, or bridle-tracks, leading towards the sierras, there appeared to be something "uncanny" about this *raterillo*. Agua-Dulce was one of those men who acquire much fame without having done anything to justify it. As a robber, he was of the meaner sort, fertile in resource in planning his small crimes, and relying more on effrontery than bravery to avoid capture. His victims were almost exclusively poor charcoal-burners, or *arrieros* returning from the town with their hard-earned gains—three or four to twenty dollars, received for weeks of toilsome labour—the very class whom Vizco el Borje subsidized, and by judicious generosity made subservient to his more exalted schemes. Thus the very men who, *nolens volens*, became allies and satellites of Vizco, were Agua-Dulce's habitual victims and bitterest enemies.

It is from the lips of Antonio Sanchez, formerly of the Municipal Guard of Jerez de la Frontera, and now retired on pension, that we have the following account of the career and death of the miscreant known as Agua-Dulce. Sanchez was, moreover, the man who slew him.

Agua-Dulce was suspected of having various accomplices: his favourite defence was to prove an *alibi*, and his success in throwing the authorities off the scent by this means pointed to combinations which were not visible on the surface. At the hour when the particular robbery with which he was charged had been committed, Agua-Dulce showed that he was in the town and had saluted this or that functionary. And these latter were always ready to support his defence as witnesses. Among other unacknowledged alliances, Agua-Dulce was reputed to enjoy the

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protection of a certain magistrate of influential position in Seville, who was stated to be on terms of intimacy with his sister, a woman of remarkable beauty.

The following occurrence, which refers to, perhaps, the only robbery of magnitude carried out by Agua-Dulce, was cited by Sanchez in proof of the above report. A sum representing nearly six hundred pounds, all, curiously enough, in the smallest gold coin, had been taken from Don Juan Malvido of Jerez. A few days later, Agua-Dulce was discovered in a wine-shop of the Calle Cruz Vieja, dividing with two other men a large quantity of these same small gold coins. He was arrested and imprisoned. The judge at that time was one Alvarez, who was, however, absent from his post on account of illness; the interim authority being Don Juan Cerron, a man of upright and intrepid principle, who believed that now sufficient evidence was forthcoming to bring home to the villain his crime, and secure at length the condign punishment he had so often deserved. When the prisoner was asked to explain how he became possessed of so much small gold, he replied it was the proceeds of a certain business he had just effected in Seville. For the purpose of ascertaining the truth of this, the judge commissioned an inquiry (*puso un exhorto*) to be made at Seville. The reply was a demand for the prisoner's presence in that city—doubtless to learn from Agua-Dulce's lips how the *exhorto* could be answered favourably to his cause!

The Jerez deputy-judge roundly refused to allow this. Then it was that the invalid judge was ordered—no matter what the state of his health—to return at once to his post. Though seriously ill, he complied with the request, and next morning from the Magisterial chair ruled that Agua-Dulce should be sent to Seville. A few days later the reply to the *exhorto* arrived—in terms entirely favourable to the prisoner, and no doubt inspired by him. No charge could now be sustained. The papers were sealed up, and Agua-Dulce once more set at liberty, the small gold coins, which every one was morally certain had proceeded from the Malvido robbery, being returned to him.

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For some years after this Agua-Dulce continued his course of petty robbery and outrage without especial incident, but with increasing audacity and immunity. Of a lady named Varela he had demanded three thousand dollars under threat of destroying the valuable stock of mares upon her farm of Vicos. Of Don Antonio Diaz, of Paterna, he had requisitioned a thousand dollars under similar terms: and a large number of donkeys belonging to Don José Calero, also of Paterna, who had refused his extortions, were found with their throats cut. Lastly, from a farm-steward at Romanina he had taken a small sum of money, his gun, and cartridge-belt. The authorities in this last (minor) case had clear evidence against Agua-Dulce and were keenly on his track.

The crimes of the miscreant (all these having occurred within a few days) were thus assuming alarming proportions, and two amongst the Municipal Guard of Jerez swore they would put an end to him. On the 23rd of May these two, Antonio Sanchez and José Salado, were returning towards Jerez after several days of fruitless search, when, passing the ford of the Alamillo (a preserve belonging to the Duke of San Lorenzo), a woman informed them that Agua-Dulce had been at work only an hour or two before, and had taken all he possessed from a poor *carbonero*. This decided them to remain in the neighbourhood, and shortly afterwards, while riding through the coverts of El Espinar, they observed two men, armed with guns, running between the trees.

The mounted guards gave chase, overhauled the men, and demanded their surrender. The reply was prompt—a couple of shots: meeting the simultaneous fire of the guards. No sooner, however, had the latter fired than Salado fell dead from his horse, for Agua-Dulce's bullet had gone true. Sanchez leaped from his saddle and, seeing that one robber was done for, went for the other, whom he now recognized as Agua-Dulce. A hand-to-hand struggle was imminent, but the bandit availed himself of the thick lentisk-covert, and contrived to put some distance between himself and his assailant. Both knew it was a

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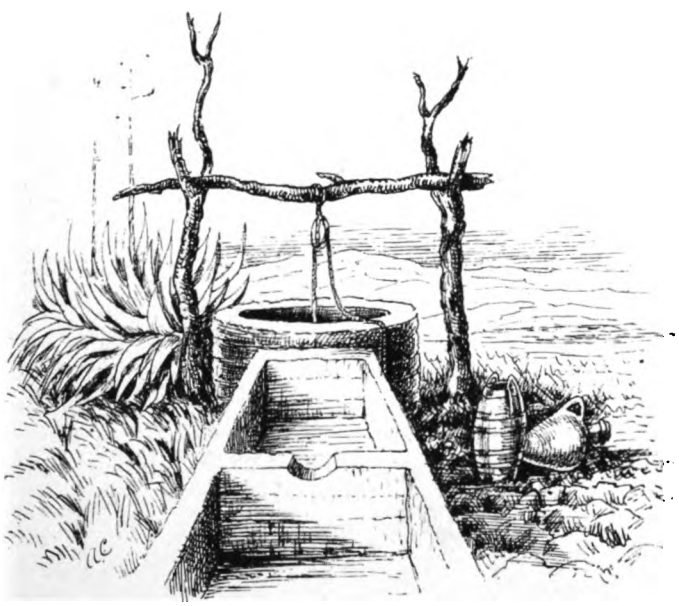
duel to the death. Second shots were exchanged, and this time Agua-Dulce was wounded. Sanchez again called on him to surrender, but again the reply was a bullet, which narrowly missed a vital spot. A second ball now struck the robber in the side, bringing him to the ground. While Sanchez reloaded, the wounded desperado managed again to rise to his feet and drew a pistol from his belt: but he was just not quick enough, and ere he could aim, a bullet from Sanchez's barrel had perforated him from chest to shoulder.



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CHAPTER XI.

THE SPANISH IBEX.

NOTES ON ITS NATURAL HISTORY, HAUNTS, HABITS, AND DISTRIBUTION.

THE ibex, or wild goat, has a wide range throughout the Alpine regions of the old world: and wherever it is found, from Spain to the Himalayas, takes a chief place amongst the beasts of chase. Few pictures, indeed, does the animal-world present more perfect than an old ibex-ram,* with his thick-set, game-like form, his hoary coat and flowing beard, and those massive, widely-curving horns—no trophy more dear to the big-game sportsman, and few so hard to secure.

The Spanish Peninsula can boast an ibex peculiar to itself, a noble beast not to be found elsewhere than on Iberian soil. Till recently, we shared the opinion that two forms of ibex existed in Spain—the Pyrenean type, and the slightly divergent *Capra hispanica* of the southern sierras: but further experience and a comparison of heads from various points, have convinced us that (except in the matter of size) there is no material difference between the Spanish races of wild goats. No difference, that is, greater than might naturally be looked for as between isolated colonies, separated one from another during centuries—for the ibex of Nevada or of Gredos is as effectually divided from his kind in the Pyrenees as though wide oceans rolled between.

* The English language provides no word specially to designate a male goat. We have, therefore, fallen back on the word *ram*, which, though not strictly accurate, is the nearest available term.

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Differences in habits, haunts, and food are well known to produce, during extended periods, corresponding differences in form: but so far as we are able to judge, the only material variation between the so-called *Capra pyrenaica*, of the north, and the *C. hispanica*, of Southern and Central Spain, is that of size. The Pyrenean ibex is a larger animal: but the horns are almost, though not quite, identical in form with those from the Sierra Nevada*: while both differ most materially from the well-known horns of the typical ibex, the *Capra ibex* of the Alps and of Central Europe.

These differences will be seen at a glance in the photographs and rough sketches we annex. Briefly, the horns of the true ibex bend regularly backwards and downwards in a more or less uniform, scimitar-like curve: while those of *all* Spanish goats, after first diverging laterally, become re-curved both inwards and finally upwards. That is, while in the one case the horns present a simple circular bend, in the Spanish ibex they form almost a spiral.†

A minor point of difference consists in the form of the annular notches, or rings. These in the Alpine ibex run more or less straight around, encircling the horn in front roughly like steps in a ladder: while in *Capra hispanica* they run obliquely in a spiral ascent. These annulations indicate the age of the animal—one notch to each year: but the count must stop where the spiral ends. Beyond that, there is always the lightly-grooved tip which does not alter.

The horns of the female ibex are weak and comparatively short—only some six or seven inches in length, not unlike those of the chamois, but not so sharply hooked. These do *not* grow annually: hence there is not the ready index of age afforded by the horns of the rams. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to add that the horns of goats are *permanent*, and not cast yearly as is the case with deer.

* Horns from Nevada are thinner, more compressed laterally, and the ridges show the spiral curves less distinctly. It is, after all, the old question of what constitutes a species.

† The horns of the Spanish ibex rather resemble those of the burrell, or wild sheep of the Caucasus, &c., than typical ibex-horns.

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The following are the maximum dimensions of the heads of male ibex, measured by the authors—all from the central and south-Spanish sierras.

Age.	Length.	Sweep.	Circumference.
1. Five years ...	18½ in. ...	11½ in. ...	9⅜ in.
2. Eight ,, ...	27½ ,, ...	23 ,, ...	9 ,,
3. ,, ,, ...	28¼ ,, ...	19 ,, ...	8¾ ,,
4. ,, ,, ...	29 ,, ...	18¾ ,, ...	9 ,,
5. Aged	29 ,, ...	22½ ,, ...	9¼ ,,
6. ,, ...	29¼ ,, ...	23¼ ,, ...	9½ ,,

Through the kindness of the late Sir Victor Brooke, we are also enabled to give the following measurements of his three best Pyrenean ibex heads.

	Length.	Sweep.	Circumference.
A.	26 in. ...	21 in. ...	10 in.
B.	29 ,, ...	23 ,, ...	10 ,,
C.	31 ,, ...	26½ ,, ...	8¾ ,,

Sir Victor Brooke wrote :—"A. This was a very grand *old* ibex: but the points were broken and his horns rubbed smooth with age. The Pyrenean ibex are much larger beasts than those from the southern sierras."

The natural home of the ibex may be defined as exclusively amidst the summits of the wildest rock-mountains and most alpine spots upon earth—subject, however, to such, apparently accidental, variations of this general rule, as will be found hereinafter mentioned. Here their hollowed hoofs and marvellous agility enable them to traverse, at full speed, ice, crag, and precipice that seem absolutely impassable, and to mount rock-walls where no visible foothold exists, throwing into heart-breaking insignificance our puny efforts to encompass them. If a man's heart swells with the pride of strength—if he flatters himself that he is master of all the beasts of the field and of the arts of field-craft, let him try a campaign with the wild-goats—verily there is no sublunar undertaking better calculated to take the conceit out of him. Mere figures give but a poor idea: to say that the favourite haunts of ibex lie at altitudes of 8,000 to 10,000 feet, is hardly any real criterion of the difficulties and

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hardships of their pursuit. Suffice it here to say that the mere ascent to such heights occupies well-nigh a whole day: even when encamped among the fringe of the snow,

SPANISH IBEX, OLD RAM—SIERRA DE GREDOS.

the climb-out to the summits may still require two or three hours of the hardest work.

Ibex are found throughout the highlands of the Peninsula, from Pyrenees to Mediterranean, but not continuously—their haunts being distinct and separated by

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intervening plains. They inhabit all the Pyrenees* and are comparatively numerous on the hills round Andorra (Pyrénées orientales). In the south their great strongholds are the Sierras Nevada and Morena, where herds of twenty, thirty, or even fifty, may sometimes be seen together. Besides these main southern haunts, the ibex have several detached colonies in the hill-ranges of Andalucia and Estremadura. Along all the elevated cordillera of Central Spain, the ibex find a congenial home: but their chosen stronghold is in the extensive Sierra de Gredos. This elevated point is the apex of the long Carpeto-Vetonico range which extends from Moncayo through the Castiles and Estremadura, forming the watershed of the Tagus and Douro; it separates the two Castiles, and passing the frontier of Portugal, is there known as the Serra da Estrella, which (with the Cintra hills) extends to the Atlantic seaboard. Along all this extensive cordillera there is no more favourite ground for the ibex than its highest peak, the Plaza de Almanzor, 10,000 feet above sea-level. During the winter and early spring the wild goats have a predilection for the southern slopes towards Estremadura: but in summer and autumn large herds, often numbering dozens, and especially the noble rams, make their home in the environs of Almanzor and the lonely alpine lakes of Gredos.

Our personal experiences of the Spanish ibex are limited to four points—two in the southern sierras, and two on the central cordillera: in three of which the habits of the goats exhibited some very remarkable variations. These, however, we describe more particularly when treating of ibex-shooting in other chapters.

The ibex is strictly nocturnal in its habits, passing the day at rest, either on the snow-fields or amidst the most rugged and inaccessible ground within its reach, and only descending to lower levels to feed after sun-down. This

* "In the Pyrenees," Sir Victor Brooke writes us, "they are rare, and live in the worst precipices I ever saw an animal in. They go into far worse ground than chamois, and are *very* nocturnal—never seen except in the dusk and early dawn, unless disturbed."

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habit never varies. In the more elevated cordilleras, where, even in summer, there remain great expanses of

SPANISH IBEX, OLD RAM—SIERRA NEVADA. (Front view.)

snow and glacier-ice, the wild goats retire at dawn to the heights, spending the day on some bare rock or among the crevices of crags islanded in the snow-field, and always

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guarded from danger of surprise by sentries, who hold watch and ward from some commanding point. Here, except sometimes during the hottest days of July and August, they are all but inaccessible—it is impossible to "turn their flank," for they have, behind them, vast breadths of snow impassable to man: while the vigilance of their sentries simply mocks the stalker—even if their position is not physically inexpugnable. The only systematic method employed by native hunters, at such times, is the unsatisfactory one of waiting, at dusk, to "cut them out" in the passes by which they are accustomed to descend to their feeding-grounds—a bitterly cold and most uncertain undertaking, to say nothing of its danger, for after sun-down the soft snow freezes into a solid ice-sheet, cutting off the hunter's retreat along the steep slope of the sierra.

The ibex of these higher sierras never descend to the level where pines, high brushwood, or indeed any covert can grow. Their home is on the snow and rock, and they only descend as far as that zone of moss, heath, and stunted alpine vegetation which intervenes between the snow-line and the highest levels of conifer or tree-growth. Their food consists of the bloom and shoots of various alpine shrubs, grasses and flowers—the Spanish gorse, broom, rosemary, and *piorno*, as well as certain narcissi, mountain-berries, and the peasants' scant crops of rye-grass. For this latter luxury they are tempted to come down rather lower: but under no circumstances, not even in winter, are the ibex of Gredos or Nevada found in the forests or amongst covert of any kind.

Such, in outline, are the habits of the ibex of the higher sierras. But ibex also exist on mountain-ranges of much lesser elevations, and *there* their habits differ widely. Some of these lower hills are covered with brushwood to their very crests—one has pines on its summit, at 4,800 feet. Here the ibex cannot, of course, disdain the shelter of the scrub, and even frequent the forests at much lower elevations. We have hunted them in ground that looked far more suitable for roe-deer, and have even seen the "rootings" of pig overlapping the feeding-grounds of the goats.

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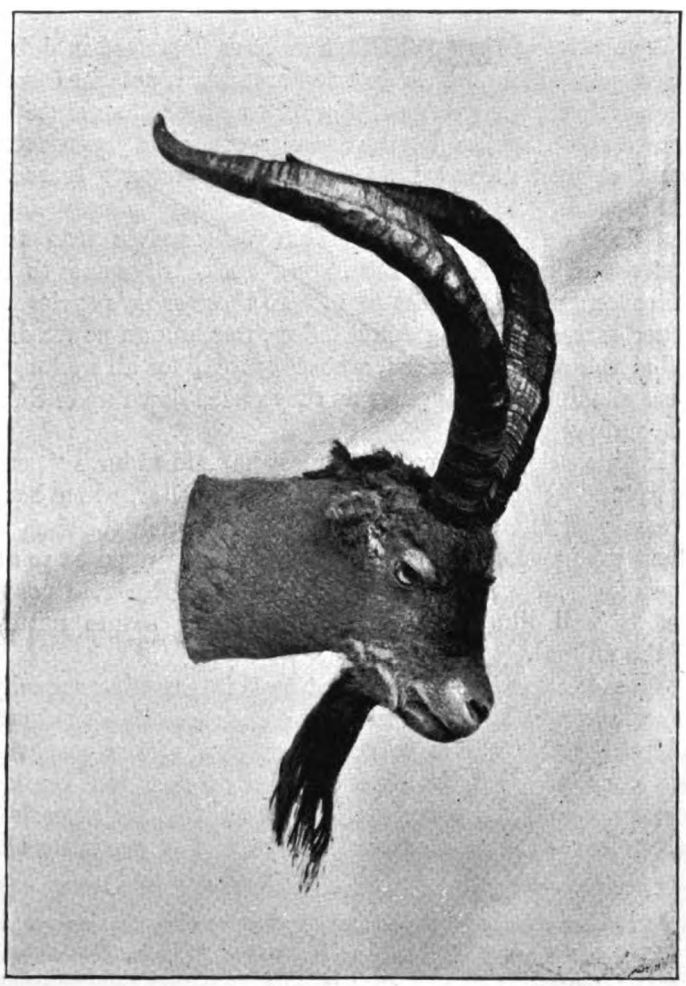
In such situations, the ibex form regular "lairs" amidst the fastnesses of broom, gorse and thorny *abolága*, on the



SPANISH IBEX. OLD RAM. (Side view.)

bloom of which they browse by night, without having to descend or to shift their quarters at all. On these lower hills the ibex owe their safety—and survival—exclusively

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to the rough and intercepted nature of the ground, overgrown for miles with forest and matted brushwood; and, in some degree, to their own comparatively small numbers.*

A third very distinct habitat we have described in detail elsewhere. Here, on an isolated mountain, detached from the adjoining sierras, and affording neither the refuge of snow-fields nor jungle, the mother-wit of a segregated band of ibex managed to discover a sanctuary scarcely less secure. As elsewhere described, they simply shut the door on pursuit by betaking themselves into the clefts and crannies of a hanging rock-wall some three miles long and 2,000 feet high. To these eagle's eyries no other terrestrial being could follow, nor human power dislodge the astute *montêses*, whose beards, for all we know, were shaking with laughter as they gazed down upon their discomfited enemies.

In this case, the ibex may almost be said to have "gone to ground"; for they actually sought shelter, when hard pressed, in the caves and ravines with which the face of these precipices were serried. This seems opposed to all one's ideas of what *ought* to be the habits of a wild goat; but it well illustrates the pre-eminently astute nature of the animal.

Were it otherwise—were it not for this reasoning sagacity in utilizing the natural resources of each locality—in short, adapting their habits to the necessities of the case, the existence of these isolated colonies of ibex, on limited terrain, would be impossible. Even as it is, their survival is, we fear, in some cases, only a question of years, for the *tiradores* of the sierra hunt them in season and out. The

* The ibex of Asia Minor—a quite distinct species, *Capra ægragus*—appears, according to Mr. E. N. Buxton (*Nineteenth Century*, February, 1891, p. 251, *et seq.*), to have somewhat similar habits, frequenting the pine forests and lower wooded slopes of the hills, by preference to the treeless summits. But the Turkish mountaineer is a very different man to his Spanish representative, and appears utterly careless of the charms of the chase, seldom molesting the wild goats, whereas in Spain they are rarely left in peace while there is a chance of killing them.

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Plate XIX. ON THE CRAGS OF ALMANZÓR. Page 137.

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serrano hunts rather for the pot than for sport, and spares neither sex nor age. With all his sportsman-like qualities and skill in his craft, our friend is not truly a sportsman. He is, we fear, but a butcher at heart; *meat* is what he seeks; to him a female is only a less desirable quarry than her lord in the ratio of her smaller weight—about one-fourth less. It is the same with everything; with partridge, a covey at a shot, as they run up in file to the traitor *reclamo;* with bustard, to massacre a pair as they stoop to drink at a water-hole in the thirsty summer days; with trout, to decimate a river by poisoning the streams, tipping in a cart-load of quicklime, or blowing up a pool by dynamite—such are the cherished objects of our friend, the Spanish *cazador;* and yet, despite it all, we like him, and are never happier than during the hours we spend in his company around the camp-fire.

In form and build, the ibex represents the very perfection of combined power and action—if physical adaptation counts in the struggle for the "survival of the fittest," the wild goat need hardly fear extinction. His thickset frame, broad front, and prominent eyes, with well-poised neck, clean quarters, and the light muscular legs set well within his short round barrel, all bespeak qualities which admirably adapt him to the hard, strange life assigned by nature to the wild-goat.

During the summer months, the ibex feast luxuriously on the abundant crop of mountain-grasses, flowering shrubs and rush, which at that season clothe the Alpine solitudes; and, later, on the various berries and wild fruits of the hills. By autumn they are in their highest condition —the long black beards of the old rams fully developed, and their brown coats long, glossy, and almost uniform in colour. At this period the rutting season takes place—in October; and the *machos* fight furiously for the assembled harems—rearing on hind legs for a charge, the crash of opposing horns resounds afar across the glens and corries of the sierra. Even in spring their combative instinct survives; we have watched, in April, a pair of veterans sparring at each other for an hour together.

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The young ibex are born in April, and soon learn to follow their dams—graceful little creatures, like brown lambs, easily captured if the mother is shot, but not otherwise. One is the usual number, but two is not infrequent. It is a curious fact that the kid remains with its dam upwards of a year—that is, till after a second family has been born. Consequently it is usual, in spring, to see the females in trios—the mother, her yearling daughter, called the *chivata*, and the new-born kid, or *chivo*. Though, as just stated, there are often two young, yet we have never seen more than one *chivata* with each female ibex—possibly it is only the female kids that remain so long with their dams. In May the *chivatas* are conspicuously smaller than the adult females, but their horns are nearly as large.

At this season (April–May) the ibex are changing their coats; the males have almost entirely lost their flowing beards, and in colour assume a hoary, piebald appearance, especially on cheeks and forequarters, contrasting with the darker portions above and behind. The muzzle is warm cream-colour, and the lower part of the leg (below the knee) prettily marked with black and white; on the knee, a callosity, or round patch of bare hard skin. The horns of yearling males are larger and heavier than those of adult females.

Though it is the custom of the hill-shepherds during summer to drive out their herds of goats to pasture on the higher ranges of the sierra, where they must sometimes come in contact with their wild congeners, yet no interbreeding takes place; nor can the race of wild ibex be reduced to domesticity. The hunters frequently capture the young ibex—it is sometimes given as an excuse for killing the dam—yet they rarely survive long in captivity, and never mate with the domestic goat. In May we could not hear of a single wild kid of the previous year's capture that had survived the twelvemonth in any of the hill-villages of Gredos. The form of the horns in the domestic goat is essentially different; they are much flatter, thinner, and not a quarter as large as those of the

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wild ibex. The latter can hardly have been the progenitor of the race of goats now domesticated in Spain.

The smell of a dead ibex is specially strong and unpleasant—an old male stinks far worse than a vulture; yet little or no trace of this remains after cooking. Their flesh is firm and brown, fairly good eating, but without any special flavour or individuality—that is, when subjected to the rude cookery of the camp.

OLD OLIVE-TREES—NEAR TALAVERA.

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CHAPTER XII.

IBEX-SHOOTING IN SPAIN.

I.—Sierra de Gredos (Old Castile).

Twenty-six hours on the railway—at first with the comparative luxury of a Pullman-car: the last seven crawling across the Castilian plain, towards the frowning ridges that look down on Talavera, whereon our Iron Duke repulsed nearly twice his numbers of French, and turned the tide of war: then thirty odd miles in a diligence, and finally a five-league mountain-scramble on mules—this it costs us to reach the home of the Castilian ibex.

Night was closing in and sleet descending in driving sheets, when at length, round a projecting spur, we sighted our destination. The hamlet hung on the steep slope of the sierra, whose snow-clad heights and jagged peaks, towering away into cloud-land, gave us a fair forecast of the labours in store. As for the village—a more picturesque, rumble-tumble maze of quaint, shapeless hovels, all pitched down apparently at random, with their odd chimneys, odd balconies and projecting gables, all wood-built, it would be hard for fancy to depict, or for artist to discover. And the natives—the light-framed, lithe mountaineers, clad in the short *majo* jackets, tight knee-breeches and cloth gaiters, with smart sky-blue waistcoats, brass-buttoned, and crimson *fajas:* the women enveloped in brilliant *mantas* of grass-green or scarlet, and with short petticoats that displayed rounded limbs, bare to the knee—verily we seemed to have fallen upon some surviving vestige of Goth or Moor, all unknown to the world, hidden away in these recesses of the sierra.

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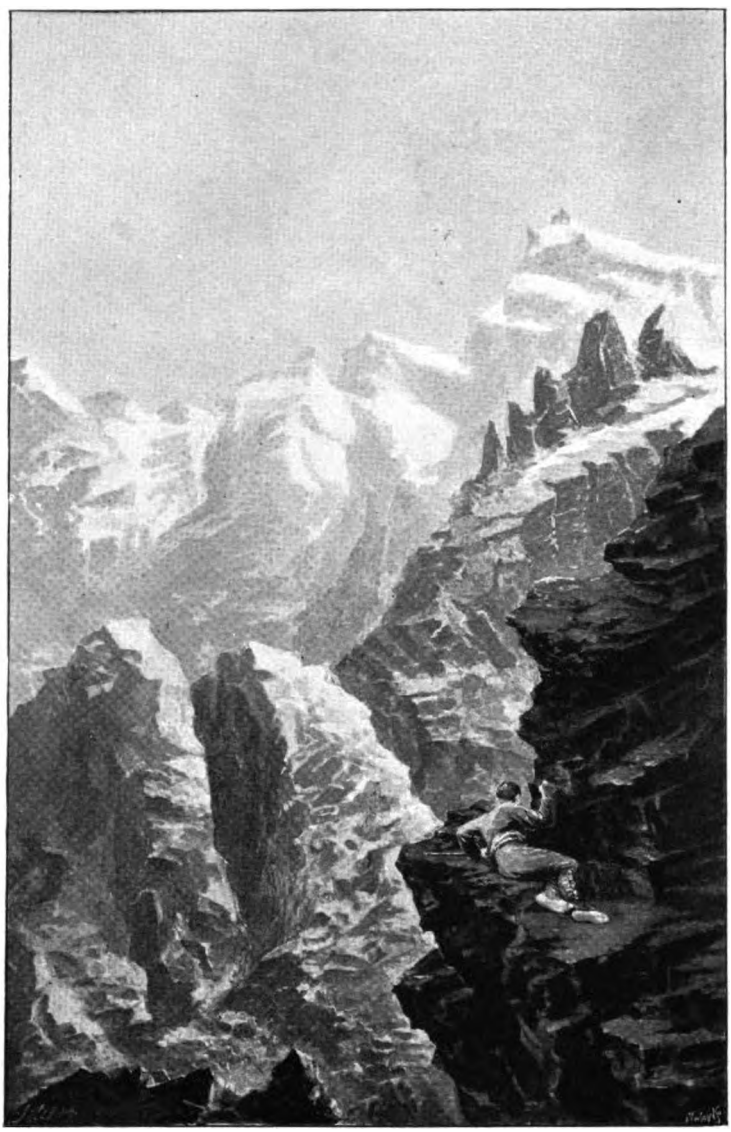

Plate XX. Page 141.

THE HOME OF THE IBEX—A SKETCH IN THE SIERRA DE GREDOS.

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Such things, however, had but a platonic interest for men weary, drenched and travel-worn: and a terrible shock remained in store, when, upon a low paneless barn, we deciphered, in hieroglyphic symbols, the word *posada*. At the moment of our observing the ill-boding sign, a pig was in the act of entering the portals.

Nothing, however, remained but to make the best of it. The cold was intense, and in the deluge of rain and sleet outside, it was impossible to erect our tent, even had a level site existed. We had with us, however, on this campaign, a genius, and with magic skill Vicente transformed the uncouth den: order replaced chaos: our bedsteads were erected, basins, towels, soap, even chairs and a table appeared as by legerdemain: while a savoury *olla* with two brace of quarter-pound trout from the burn below, and a stoup of good red wine, stood before us.

We soon had the local hunters collected around us, all old friends—Magdaléno, the crack shot of the sierra, Claudio, Juanito, and little Ramon: but their reports were not encouraging.* The snow on the heights was still impassable: Almanzor and the Lagunas de Gredos were inaccessible, and these regions formed, we knew, the *madre* —the true home of the ibex. The system of the *ojéo*, or mountain-drive, was only practicable as yet (May) on three or four limited areas of the sierra: but there also remained open to us the resource of stalking the ibex. Of this sport we will speak later; but we decided at first to adopt the plan of *montería*, or big beats.

The first day's *batida* embraced a huge natural amphitheatre of rock, seven or eight miles in circuit, as roughly depicted opposite. Our men had left before dawn to gain the furthest flank, and we followed soon after, to climb out to the peaks directly above. At first we ascended on little shaggy mules, without saddle, stirrups, or bridle—only a single cord to the nose-halter and a padded roller to sit on. The upward route was as follows: one day will serve to describe all. On the lower slopes (3,000 to 4,000 feet),

* A previous expedition in Gredos had proved entirely blank, not an ibex being secured in a fortnight's shooting.

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rough pine forest, gradually opening out, and giving place to a zone of brushwood and coarse vegetation: above, another zone, of esparto and wiry grass interspersed with patches of a peculiar gorse and rosemary scrub, and the *piorno*, a tough green shrub, whose bleached limbs closely resemble human skeletons. Here and there one could imagine that the rugged slope had been, at no remote period, the scene of a bloody battle.* Above this level, plant-life rapidly grows scarcer and more alpine—the bleaberry and gentian, stunted heaths and *piornos*, with beds of purple saxifrage, white and violet crocuses, and a yellow narcissus, the two last right up to the snow.

The riding here grew worse and worse: the little mules scrambled like cats over the naked rocks, but at last even they could no further go, and were left, picketed in rock-stalls, on some hanging shelf. Now came a terrible scramble on foot—hardly a step but needed to be made good by hand-hold also, and then we reached the lower snows. Treacherous ground this, here frozen into miniature glaciers, there soft and "rotten," or, worst of all, hollowed beneath, precipitating one in a moment upon cruel rocks below. Here several minor accidents, and one of a more serious nature occurred: but after all we prefer the snow to the penultimate zone above—the region of naked rock-matrix (in Spanish *canchos corridos*), where smooth slippery faces of granite left no hold either for the snow, or for feet, though clad in hempen-soled *alpara-gatas;* and every crevice filled level with frozen striæ of snow. Mass above mass towered these monoliths of living granite, veined and streaked with the narrow snow-lines: and beyond them, stretching away for leagues, came the snow-fields of Gredos, imposing in the majesty of a contemporary glacial epoch, and the silence of ever-lasting ice.

We had high hopes of success in this first *batida*, for

* The ibex are very fond of this shrub, which in summer has a red bloom; and the zone of the *piornales* is the lowest to which they descend, even in winter.

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the ground covered was of great extent, traversed by many ravines and corries, and had not been disturbed since the preceding autumn. Yet it proved blank: only a single ibex (male) was enclosed, and it escaped on the right, to snow-fields beyond our reach.

This operation had lasted four hours, during which the cold had been intense, a bitter blast blowing with hurricane-force through the rock-passes where we held guard, as through a funnel. At intervals the wind came laden with fine snow or jagged crystalline icicles which ricochetted from the rocks like things of life. At one period—the climax of the storm—if a hundred ibex or wolves had filed past the writer's post, his fingers were too benumbed by exposure to have handled the rifle. The ascent had also occupied four hours—the apparent altitude (by aneroid) being nearly 8,000 feet—and the return to the spot fixed for our camp would require two more. Hence no time remained for further operations that day, and we returned, sad and empty-handed, to camp.

Two blank days followed, and on the third a hurricane of wind, rain, and driving mist forbade all hope of sport. The first beat next morning was again blank, no ibex being seen; but a second, though covering a much smaller area, enclosed a band of eleven. These, when first viewed, were coming in directly towards the guns, and held this course till lost to sight in an intervening ravine. Shortly afterwards the upper flank of the beaters crested the further ridge, and at once, we saw, they opened out their line, extending upwards towards the snow. These men had already seen that the goats, true to their natural instincts, were seeking to gain the higher ground: and a marvellous sight ensued—to watch, through the binoculars, these hardy mountaineers fairly racing with the fleet-footed ibex, and striving, by sheer speed and strength of limb and lung, to head their flight, and cut off their retreat to the snow-sanctuaries above.

At first one could not believe that biped, however specially organized, could possibly cope, in simple activity, with the wild-goats on their native rocks. Yet, when the

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game emerged from the gorge, it became evident that the flank-movement had, at least to some extent, succeeded: for the now-alarmed animals, though still tending upwards, had abandoned the idea of direct escape in that direction, and were now ascending the rocks in a slanting course which pointed very little beyond our own positions. The writer, who occupied the upper post, at the foot of some terrific *canchos*, which, in cold blood, had seemed insuperable, now, in the excitement of the chase, found means—*nescio quos*—to surmount the obstacle and gain a "pass" beyond, by which, it seemed likely, the game might seek escape. More nimble still, our friend Magdaléno had ere this, with winged feet, reached a yet greater height: and here, as the ibex, scudding upwards with surprising speed, passed in straggling file, his single ball struck fair a lordly ram, and threw back the rest in dismay. Quickly followed from below the double crack of an "express": but these bullets, fired at 200 yards, produced no perceptible effect.

Turned from their first point, the ibex, now separate and scattered, when next they appeared, were heading, some for the snow-fields direct, others for the lower passes: in one of which a five-year-old male offered a chance, at eighty yards, to the ambushed "Paradox"—a chance that was not declined, though only attained at the end of a severe scramble of 200 yards across the rocks. The hollow-fronted ball struck on the ribs, and traversing the vitals, "mushroomed" itself against the shoulder-blade. Presently, from the heights above, rang out three or four reports in quick succession—the upward-bound contingent of ibex were running the gauntlet of our driving-line. A male and two females offered long or random shots to the mountaineers. One of the latter was reported hit—though the pair were followed by a *chivo*, or kid, only ten days old!—but no tangible result was secured by this fusillade.

Meanwhile the stricken *macho* had descended to the depths of the glen, where he was presently descried by our scouts stretched on the shelf of a jutting crag,

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a mile below. How human eye managed to detect so small an object amidst so vast a chaos of broken ground, rocks, screes, and scrub-clad patches, passes understanding: but soon a long "wing" thrown out, turned the flank of his

OUR FIRST OLD RAM—SIERRA DE GREDOS.

position, and the noble beast, aroused once more by the rattle of a rifle-ball on the rocks, made a final effort to escape, which was terminated by a "Paradox" bullet at twenty yards' distance. This, our first old ibex-ram, carried a handsome, massive head; but its symmetry was

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marred by one of the points being broken. The undamaged horn measured rather over twenty-eight inches.

So passed the days with varying incident, which it boots not to recount in detail; sometimes we saw game, more often the reverse. One element alone remained permanent and changeless — the daily labour was extreme. Strength and physical powers were taxed—aye, strained, almost to the breaking point, and in these contests of lung and limb the wild-goat necessarily held the advantage.

One morning, wind and weather being favourable, it was proposed to double-bank our beaters—that is, to drive two separate valleys at once towards a single dividing spur.* The ascent to-day followed the ridge of a deep *garganta*, or rock-abyss, embedded among pines, on one of which was superimposed a pile of branches and sticks—the home of a pair of Black Vultures (*Vultur monachus*). It was almost a solitary tree—one of the few that survived above the pine-zone, finding root-hold in a crevice of the hanging rock: a flat-topped, wind-tormented tree, its spreading branches distorted by the weight of winter's snows. Hard by the nest sat one of these colossal birds, not 200 yards away, though to have reached the spot, across the gorge, might have occupied an hour. An "express" bullet was sent whistling past his monkish cranium; slowly the great wings unfolded, and the vulture flapped heavily down the ravine.

Vultures are comparatively scarce in this part of Spain —far more so than in Andalucia. We only noticed one small colony in the Sierra de Gredos; and of its six or eight pairs, our beaters, who passed close below their eyries, declared that two were of the black species. The Black Vulture is not known to nest either gregariously or

* It is worth mentioning, as showing the importance of the wind and the precarious nature of this pursuit, that on the former occasion a sudden change in the wind had destroyed all chance for the day, and rendered useless many hours' hard work and carefully-planned operations. Even a "flaw" in its direction is often fatal to success, so keen of scent is the *cabra montés*.

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on rocks: yet we have twice in Andalucia noticed them *apparently* doing both these things—associated with Griffons—but without, on either occasion, reducing the observation to proof. The above statement, however, tends to confirm the fact. Bird-life, as in most mountain-regions, was not abundant here. Buzzards soared over the pines, and the song of our common thrushes and blackbirds rang through the woods as at home. Higher up were ring-ousels and redstarts, wheatears (*Saxicola aurita* and *S. stapazina*), black chats (*Dromolœa leucura*), skylarks and titlarks—all these breeding. Besides these, we also observed the Egyptian Vulture, the Alpine pipit (*Anthus spipoletta*), and Alpine accentor (*Accentor collaris*), both common, the blue thrush, rock-thrush, nuthatch, and Dartford warbler: and on May 10th, at 5,500 feet, after a stormy night, picked up, in a disabled state, a pretty little bluethroat (*Cyanecula wolfi*, Brehm) of the *unspotted* variety, with entirely blue gorget. This little wanderer had doubtless perished by the severities of weather encountered in crossing this lofty range on his passage to the north. During an afternoon's trouting in a hill-burn on May 13th, the following additional species were observed (altitude 5,000 feet)—ortolans, cirl- and corn-buntings, stonechats, wagtails, crag-martins, and sandpiper.

Ravens and choughs tenanted the crags, and the redlegs were met with very high up. Both in this sierra, in Nevada, and other alpine ranges, we have kept a strict look-out for ptarmigan, but not a sign of them have we met with. They are unknown to the *cazadores* of the sierras, and it appears certain that none exist in Spain, save in the Pyrenees.

On some precipitous rocks adjoining one of our posts to-day was an eyry of some large bird of prey—either a lammergeyer or some eagle, whose young brood kept up a plaintive, chattering wail while we were there. The spot, however, was inaccessible owing to deep snow and tremendous *canchos* which intervened. One day, close to the snow-line, we came across a fat, blue-grey little beastie, apparently of the dormouse tribe (*Liron*, in Spanish), but

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he got to earth, or rather rock, ere we could capture him.* But we must return to our ibex.

Though, as regards venison, this day's operations proved fruitless, yet it remains memorable for the magnificent spectacle afforded of the wild ibex on his native heights. As the beaters, looking at the distance like mites or fleas, gradually drew in towards the peaks of "El Cumbrasco," a herd of eight ibex were observed slowly picking an upward course towards the *picachos del cañon*. Disturbed, apparently, by some goatherd below, these ibex never offered any promise of a shot; yet the spectacle they presented, while still wholly careless of danger, the easy grace of every movement and spring-like step as they bounded from rock to rock, was one of those rare views of wild life one seldom enjoys and never forgets.

The ibex took the snow about midway between our two lines, and on the glacier-foot, below the "Cannon Rock," they halted as though to court admiration—the grand wide sweep and graceful curve of the horns carried by two old rams set off in sharply defined outline against the snowy background.

Other days were devoted to stalking the ibex—each, with his *cazador* and a single gun-carrier, on a separate hill; and this was perhaps the hardest work of all,

* From big game to butterflies is a far cry; yet, on the chance of having some entomological readers, we may mention the following *Rhodopalocera* observed in these Central Spanish sierras: On the wooded slopes and among the scrub, the speckled wood (*Ægeria*) and a large wall (? sp.) were common; so also was a small species of azure blue. A single orange-tip (*Cardamines*) was observed, and several of the handsome *Melanargia sillius*. A very small copper was perhaps *Polyommatus virgaureæ, var. Miegii*, Vogel, and of the clouded yellows, *Colias phicomone*, E., higher, and *C. edusa* and *hyale*, lower, were also observed. On the heights was a small orange-, or chestnut-coloured insect, very active, and quite unknown to us. A hairstreak (? *Theckla roboris*) and *L. sinapis* occurred in the lower woods, where the brilliant *Gonopterix Cleopatra* was also seen, as well as one or two examples of a large and very handsome insect, apparently of the *Limenitis* group—chequered black-and-white, probably *L. camilla*, F. One should, however, be a specialist to identify these exotic species.

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Plate XXI. Page 148.

IBEX-HUNTING—THE TWO OLD RAMS AT THE "CANNON-ROCK."

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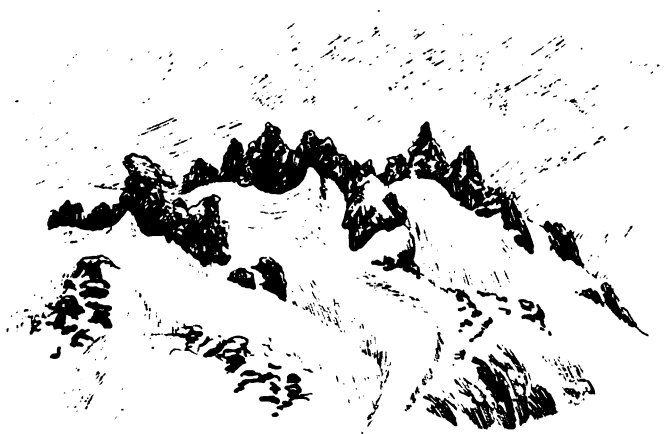
involving almost incessant climbing, scrambling, and walking on the worst of ground from morning till long after dark. But in this sport we have hitherto met with no success, either on this or other occasions. The Spanish ibex is so scarce, so rarely seen on the move by daylight, and so wedded to snow-fields beyond human reach, that it is by mere chance they are found in situations where a stalk is possible—very different to the descriptions we have by such men as Kinloch and Macintyre, of the sport that ibex afford in the Himalayas. There it would seem that *Capra sibirica* is not infrequently to be found resting, feed-



THE PEAKS OF GREDOS.

ing, or moving about by day on mountain-sides considerably below the snow, and in situations where it is possible for the stalker to approach them *from above*. In Spain, where the wild-goats are much harassed, we have never had the luck to fall in with such opportunities: though that such *do* occur is demonstrated in a subsequent chapter ("Ramon and the two big Rams"). Here, in Gredos, and also in the Andalucian sierras, it has not hitherto been our good fortune to fall in with ibex where a stalk was even remotely possible. Though ibex might be in sight daily, they have been found either on open ground

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or snow, or in crags surrounded by snow—either position equally inaccessible to human beings—save on two occasions, both towards evening, when goats have been descried on somewhat lower ground than usual; but, alas! on the opposite mountain-side, far away, and separated from us by an intervening gorge, to cross which and re-ascend the further slope would have occupied well nigh half a day. Had such opportunities but occurred *in the morning*, instead of the evening, it is just possible that this record of our ibex-stalking days might not have resulted in a blank.

It is, however, fair to add that we have never tried ibex-stalking in *summer*, when the obstruction of the snow would naturally be much less; the goats, on the other hand, have then a vastly extended field to roam over.

II.—Riscos de Valderejo.

Far away to the eastward, a triple-peaked mountain filled the whole horizon. From the distance it appeared to be composed solely of barren grey granite, and only sparse patches and striæ of snow adorned its crests. This was the Riscos de Valderejo, and on its heights there roamed, we were told, a good band of ibex, including some *machos* of the first rank.

To this sierra we projected a spring campaign. The distance (by road) from the nearest available base was some thirty miles, along smiling valleys redolent of historic interest; past castellated monasteries and fortresses, relics of feudal times, now abandoned to farmers, and to storks, whose nests lined the battlements; for the plough had long superseded the sword, and now the deep glens glory in husbandry and viticulture. Here corn and vine grow beneath olive, fig, and chestnut: verily fruit and grain seem to jostle each other—it is hard to conceive a more fertile scene; the air vocal with the melody of nightingales and orphean warblers, and the ringing note of golden orioles. The peasantry live in crazy, ramshackle hamlets,

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whose quaint picturesqueness is beyond our power to describe, but spend their *al fresco* lives in the field or the vineyard, doing a modicum of work, and a maximum of rest, eating, sleeping, or chatting, in happy, contented groups beneath the grateful shade of the chestnuts.*

Our road was a marvel of extravagant engineering, executed and maintained regardless of expense. It is only another of the many anomalies of Spain that in rich provinces, such as Andalucia, where there are carriages and traffic, there should be no roads; here, in the wilds of Castile, where there are neither traffic nor wheeled carriages, the road-system is magnificent. The explanation appears to be: in the one case, the Government says "you have money, and can make your own roads,"—in the other, "there is no money, so we will provide roads," even though they are not required.

The Riscos de Valderejo is an isolated mountain, cut off from neighbouring heights by deep gorges on all sides, save where a high, but narrow "neck" connects it on the west with the main range. Across this neck (5,000 feet) is carried the northern highway—the *carretera de Avila*, along which is carried on at intervals a frequent transit of mule-teams, droves of cattle, sheep, and the like. At the time of our first visit this traffic was almost continuous, for the ancient "Fair" of Talavera (40 miles away) was drawing supplies from all the provinces of Spain: fine young mules from far Galicia, horses even from the Asturias, cattle, goats and sheep, including a few merinos, from pastoral Leon. By day or night the monotonous tinkle of the *cencerros* (cattle-bells) ceased not on this and many another highway and bye-way for many a weary league around Talavera.

Such is still, in Spain, the far-reaching power of the "Feria," or Fair: an institution antiquated and out of date in modern lands. Yet the business and bustle, the

* Such place-names as Mom-Beltran de Lys, the Torre de la Triste Condesa, and others, seem to suggest tales of historic lore and legend, probably long since forgotten.

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display of national types and characteristics at the great provincial "fairs"—such as that at Talavera—offer pictures of Spanish rural life abounding in interest, and well worthy of study and observant description. But the pen must be directed by sympathy and understanding, or the result will merely be so much more of that silly writing and grotesque "wit," with which we are already only too well acquainted. *Pero!* . . . . *vámonos!* To our ibex.

Well, the narrow *col* or neck, connecting the Riscos with the neighbouring heights, being thus contaminated—for the wild goat will never cross a path or suffer the propinquity of man—the ibex of that sierra form an isolated colony, absolutely cut off from all contact with their fellows. That such should be able to survive on so limited a space—their territory is but eight miles by four—amidst a nation of *tiradores*, is partly due to a curious local circumstance. A pair of guardias civiles, the military police of Spain, is stationed close below the col. Here is the explanation. None of the *serranos* pay the gun-license,—twenty shillings,—and capture, red-handed, means disarmament. Hence the presence of this pair of civil guards signifies nothing less than security to the isolated ibex of the Riscos; their withdrawal would be the signal for extermination within a few years.

We had already pitched our tent on a slope above the col (5,600 feet), just within the lower fringe of snow, and were wondering at the non-arrival of our hunters. They had taken a short cut across the mountains, and should have been the first to reach the spot. But after enjoying a delicious bathe in an adjoining burn, and setting on the *olla* to stew on an improvised *anafe* (a hollowed trench, in the deep centre of which was kindled a fire), we suddenly saw them all appear, leaping down the opposite slope with the agile bounds of wild animals. They had simply lain hidden for hours, reconnoitring the movements of the civil guards! Their first act on arrival was to hide their guns among the green *piornales*. Again, when one evening the

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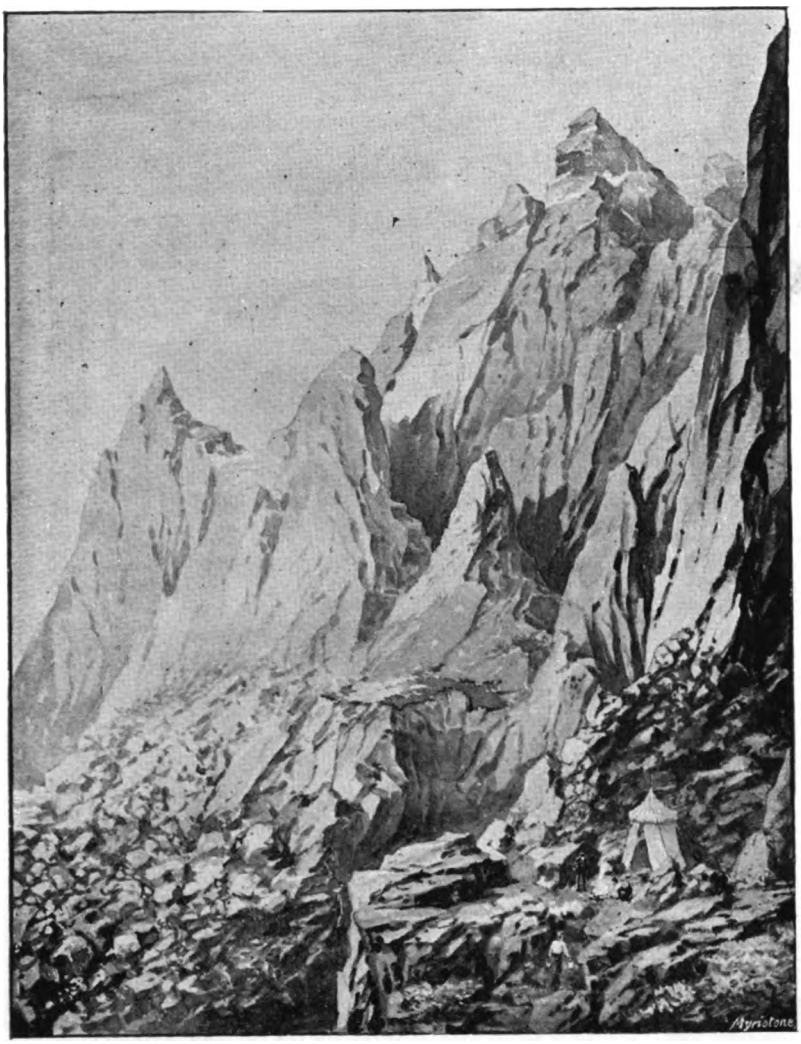

Plate XXII. OUR CAMP ON THE RISCOS DE VALDEREJO. Page 152.

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dreaded pair was reported to be ascending towards our eyry, the stampede was electric—each man seized his gun and all disappeared like rabbits among the rocks. The incident serves to show the effective power wielded by this fine corps in rural Spain.

The conformation of this sierra was simple—on the north side the slope was gradual, though abrupt: on the south almost perpendicular: that is, it formed a sheer rock-wall some three miles long and perhaps 2,000 feet high, measuring from the head of the talus.* We found here a herd of nearly a score of ibex, ensconced in well-frequented lairs among the loose rocks and *piornales* along the highest ridge (they had not been disturbed for months), and on so limited an area felt sure of more certain success than on the boundless sierras of Gredos, with their snow-sanctuaries always open to the ibex. But matters were not so simple, nor were the goats. Here, too, they had their sanctuaries. We will not weary the reader with merely sporting detail, but go at once to the point. After being "hustled" for two or three days (during which the big males always managed to keep out of shot), the ibex-leaders evidently realized the gravity of the situation: a vote of urgency was carried, and the Riscos declared in a state of siege. The space at their command was limited: there were no snow-fields available: and they resolved to seek safety in those impenetrable rock-walls and *canchos* which flanked their stronghold on the south. Into these they retreated: and from them, no power of ours could dislodge the ibex, though among the slanting *canchos* on the western flank our intrepid rock-climbers despatched a couple of slouching wolves. By sheer force of reasoning power and sagacity,

* The highest point of the Riscos appeared to be about 7,000 ft., and commanded a superb panorama of the whole Sierra de Gredos, with its towering peaks and snow-fields stretching away to their apex in the Plaza de Almanzor. With regard to altitudes, we here write with some uncertainty, as our aneroid, after being depressed to twenty-one inches, appeared to exhibit some irregularities, and had possibly suffered some internal or constitutional injury.

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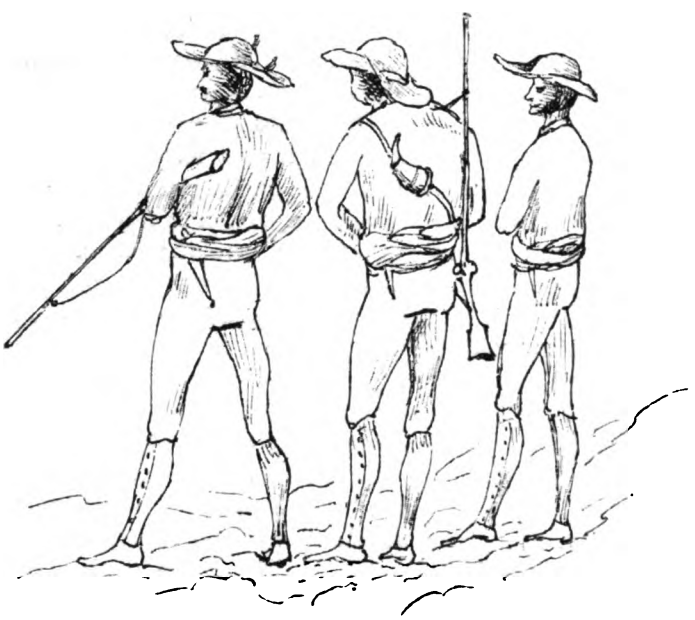
the ibex had found a retreat as secure as the *mer de glace* of Almanzor. Long may they live to enjoy it!

The retreat, however, was not gained, on one occasion, without loss—we, too, had learned by past experience. Already the driving line had appeared on the eastern heights, suggesting that another beat was to prove blank: not a sign of game had appeared—nothing save the Alpine choughs* and crag-martins, Alpine swifts, and a



IBEX-HUNTERS OF GREDOS—A SKETCH BY THE CAMP-FIRE.

pair of peregrines gyrating in the upper air: at intervals also a pair of golden eagles, whose huge eyrie projected from a rocky pinnacle, passed over in stately flight, their broad square tails deflected very conspicuously sidelong, to guide their aërial evolutions. Here purple tufts of

* We succeeded in taking several eggs of this bird in the crevices of a sheer crag, after a somewhat perilous climb. These eggs are very light-coloured; the ground colour is pale cream, faintly spotted with brown and dull greyish splashes.

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saxifrage lent colour to the barren greys: and amidst the fringe of snow grew delicate mauve and white crocuses: on a granite rock, hard by, warbled lustily a little songster, not unlike our hedge-sparrow, but whose scientific name is *Anthus spipoletta*, its tender blue-grey throat swelled with song. Suddenly a new sound diverted instant attention from all such things — it was a loud "sneeze," twice repeated: and I knew that some wild animal stood close behind the big rock which concealed me. Then followed the clatter of horny hoofs rattling on rock: and a few moments later, upon the very ridge where I lay, not ten yards from the muzzle, appeared a pair of ibex. Hardly a whole instant did they pause—pictures of high-strung wild nature, and quivering in every nerve—a lovely spectacle. At ten yards' range (*á boca de jarro* in Spanish phrase), my right barrel missed fire: and simultaneously the ibex were gone—had leaped off the ridge and down among the rocks a dozen yards below. They were, however, still near enough; and the second bullet sent the largest pitching forward on its knees, all but dividing the spine. It instantly recovered its feet, and the pair went on: but on a rock-ledge a quarter-mile away they stopped, and one lay down: a long range, random shot from the express, and the other went on alone: but the stricken beast was already dead. And then, on the rocks close by, I perceived a little wild kid, long of limb and somewhat ungainly in form, but of infinite grace in movement. Tame and confiding seemed the little mite; yet on approach, it bounded off down those broken rocks, with a speed and agility that defied pursuit. These two ibex were, in Spanish words, a *cabra* and a *chirata*.

Five other ibex (two males) sought to reach the refuge of the main rock-wall by a lower pass, where two guns were posted. Here, as they scrambled slantingly up the perpendicular face, one bullet sped true, and the best *macho* fell back, struggling to maintain a foot-hold. This his paralyzed quarters forbade, and soon what little life remained was extinguished as the stricken animal fell bouncing from rock to rock till it finally lodged

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in a cleft of a projecting spur. He proved an eight-year-old ram, with horns measuring nearly twenty-eight inches in length, with a circumference of over nine inches and a "sweep" of nearly twenty-three.

At length the time arrived to bid farewell to these rock-ramparts of Old Castile, and their primitive simple folk, kindly and honest as the day; Dionysio actually returned to our camp before daylight next morning—a two-league walk—to return a pair of boots left by one of us at his cottage! Each man already seemed an old friend. "Hasta la otra," said Juan Guarro y Guarro as he offered his hand, "y si no, que lo pasen ustedes bien!"—"Till the next time, and, if for ever, fare ye well!" The conclusions we came to were that both our visits were rather too early (May), and that the most favourable season for ibex-shooting is in July and August: but even then, whether by stalking or driving, the work is hard in the extreme.

IBEX (FEMALE)—RISCOS DE VALEDREJO.

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CHAPTER XIII.

IBEX-SHOOTING IN SPAIN—(CONTINUED).

III.—SIERRA BERMEJA (MEDITERRANEAN).

IN the last chapter are described some experiences with ibex in the distant cordilleras of Castile: but we have the wild *cabra montés* much nearer—indeed within sight of our Andalucian home. The Sierra Nevada is one of their chief abodes, and herds of goats roam the still nearer heights of Ubrique, Bermeja, and the Palmitera. As the circumstances of the ibex here vary from those already described, we now add some details of campaigns on these Mediterranean ranges.

We pitched our tents one March evening on a narrow flat plateau, barely over 2,000 feet, at a point in the Bermeja range, where our pioneer—we had employed a native *cazador* to "prospect" for five or six weeks—had localized two or three small herds of ibex. The steep mountain-sides around were clad to their utmost summits with strong brushwood and with scattered patches of pine and a species of fir (*pinsapo*)—admirable-looking ground for pig, but not at all so, according to preconceived ideas, for the wild-goat. It was, therefore, an agreeable surprise when, early next morning, there were descried three ibex, quietly grazing on the bloom of the *abolága* brush beyond a deep ravine, and only about 1,000 feet above the camp. These three, while we watched, were joined by other two, when some make-believe "sparring" ensued between a pair of rams: but at this season (March) there was obviously no great development of the combative instinct.

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The next spectacle was less welcome. On the height of the ridge, high above us, we descried against the sky-line the crouching figure of a man, stealthily advancing as though in touch of game. This ill-omened apparition, as the sequel proved, was the key-note of this campaign: the *semana santa* of Easter-tide had commenced, we were forestalled by native *cazadores*, and a carefully-planned and well-organized exhibition resulted in comparative failure.

IBEX (FEMALE)—BERMEJA.

Nor had the danger of this been entirely unforeseen, but adverse circumstances had delayed our movements.

Despite our local competitors, luck at first seemed inclined to be propitious. While going to our positions, along the knife-edged spur that enclosed our glen, an ibex fell to the rifle of one of our party, who had come suddenly on five (four good males) quietly feeding in a pine-clad corrie, and a standing shot, at 70 yards, secured one—unfortunately the only *cabra;* for, their heads being con-

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cealed among the scrub, the sex was not distinguished. This female (shot March 26th) was found, on being gralloched, to contain a pair of kids, which would not have seen the light under three weeks. Another female, followed by her *chirata*, was shot on this beat, though eventually lost, by one of our Spanish *cazadores*, Juan Marquéz.

The field of our operations was *all* scrub—strong thorny bushes clothing the steep and rock-strewn slopes, amidst which we subsequently found many "lairs" of the ibex—regular seats, like those of a hare or fox. Hidden in these strongholds, the ibex, our men asserted, would deliberately allow the beaters to pass them by: but we have strong grounds for the opinion that this only applied to the *females*—all ages or sexes, be it repeated, are alike to a *cazador*—and never to the males, which, always wild and crafty, rely for safety on far bolder tactics and modes of escape.

Pines and fir interspersed the scrub to the very *reales* or utmost heights of Bermeja—4,800 feet by aneroid: and Palmitera, though the snow lies longer there, is of a trifle less altitude. Though, on this occasion, our sport was marred and exuberance of spirit tempered by the constant competition of local hunters—by those visions of the hated "gente de Enalguacil" scampering like the goats themselves up the rocks before us—yet, at least, we enjoyed, from the crest of Bermeja, a spectacle which is probably without rival in Europe, and the like of which we have not gazed upon in our lives. Looking down from near 5,000 feet altitude, we had portions of two continents spread out as a map at out feet. The vast expanse of deep blue Mediterranean visible from such elevations is hard to picture—the level sea appears to tower up, regardless of physical laws, among the clouds themselves: yet, far beyond its southern shores, we could look right into the dark continent, across range beyond range of African mountains, terminating only in the glittering snow-peaks of the Atlas, on the verge of Saharan deserts. Gibraltar looked like a tiny islet in the Straits, midway between

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Jebel Moosa's cloud-wreathed mass, and the loftier Spanish sierras beyond Algesiraz. Tangier, Ceuta, and Melilla, on the African shore, were faintly discernible; and, on the Spanish side, the unbroken snows of Nevada, fifty miles away, glistened in the sunshine as though within rifle-shot, with all the swelling *vegas* of Western Andalucia; while, right beneath us, lay the rich *Ensenada de Marbella*, the fertile fringe that borders the Mediterranean, white with waving fields of sugar-cane, cotton, and carob, prolific of date-palm and fig-tree, of corn, oil, and wine —one of earth's most fruitful gardens.

From our posts, at the head of a dizzy tumble of rocks and screes, no fewer than five distinct mountain-ranges were in sight, one rising beyond the other, the last and loftiest clad in snow. To and fro in mid-air, far beneath, sailed a superb pair of lammergeyers, their expanded pinions gleaming almost white in the sunlight. These giant birds had their eyry in a series of granite *canchos* near the apex of the gorge; but, at intervals, also entered a cave in another crag which, we subsequently ascertained, had formed their home in a previous year.

Amongst the birds observed here, which may be mentioned as typical of the Mediterranean sierras, were golden, booted, and Bonelli's eagles, a single griffon-vulture, peregrine and goshawk, a pair of sparrow-hawks, busy carrying sticks, ravens, jays, great spotted woodpecker, wrens, crag-martins (*Cotile rupestris*), the usual chats, and a few cushats. Hawfinches and great tits were abundant among the pines, and in the early dawn the melodious song of the blue-thrush reminded one of Scandinavian springs and the redwing's note. Another small bird causes recurrent annoyance to the ibex-shooter. With a loud "rat-tat-tat," closely resembling the patter of horny hoofs on rock, its song commences; then follows a curious hissing note, not unlike the passing of a heavy body through brushwood —for a moment one hopes that the coveted and long-awaited game at length is coming. No! confound that bird; it's only a redstart!

No ibex, however, appeared here to us expectant. The

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Plate XXIII. Page 161.

IBEX-HUNTING—A SKETCH IN THE SIERRA BERMEJA.

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natives, *tiradores* of Enalguacil, of Cöin, and other hamlets of the sierra, sleeping on the open hill, and possessing twice our speed of foot on their native rocks, were always on our front; and in order to get clear of competition, we moved our camp across the ridge to the north. This operation involved sending forward at daybreak a dozen men with hatchets to clear a way for the laden mules, some fifty or sixty well-grown pines, with hundreds of lesser growth, perishing before a passage was practicable. We encamped on a forest-opening at a spot called the Majáda del Alcornoque, altitude 3,400 feet, the same evening—first having to remove several hundred stones from the camping-ground, for almost each afforded shelter to a scorpion or gigantic centipede.

Here, during the next few days, we had the (to us) singular experience of ibex-driving in thick pine-forest and deep wooded ravines, with generally a strong undergrowth of bushes and scrub—the *beau idéal* of a roe-deer country, but the last place in the world in which we should have expected wild-goat. The goats were there, nevertheless, for females and young males were seen on different occasions by guns or beaters. In one tremendous clam-shaped gorge, an ibex and a wild pig were both on foot at once! The only ibex the present writer had the luck to see in this part of the sierra—which seemed to be composed almost entirely of ironstone and other mineral ores—was by a purely fortuitous encounter. On the sudden lifting of a dense cloud-bank which rested on the mountain-side, I descried, right above me, four ibex—including two fair-sized rams—all standing on a projecting rock, in bold relief against the sky, and not above 400 yards away. The intervening ground was rugged—rocks and brushwood with scattered pines—and, except for the first fifty yards, the stalk seemed to offer no great difficulty. Already I had passed the dangerous bit, and had crawled near 200 yards, when, alas! in a moment the wet mist settled down again, and I saw no more of the game.

Curiously, on the fog first lifting, a large eagle sat, all bedraggled and woe-begone, on a rock-point not forty

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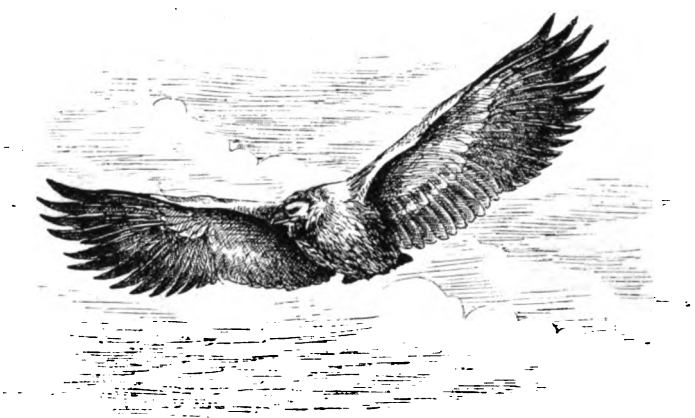
yards from my shelter, his feathers all fluffed out, and a great yellow talon protruding, as it seemed, from the very centre of his chest. Then a faint sun-ray played on his tawny plumage; he shook himself together, and launched out in air to renew his hunt, sweeping downwards close past me—luckily without disturbing the ibex, though I saw them take note of the circumstance.

To our other misfortunes was now superadded the discomfort of bad weather. Here is an extract from diary:—March 31st.—Glass fell last night four-tenths to 25′ 85″, and the morning broke with a whole gale from W., bitterly cold, with driving masses of cloud, gradually changing to rain and sleet—a bad prospect.



SOARING VULTURE.

The rain, fog, and gale continuing, sporting operations were interrupted, and a fine male ibex, shot the night before, was lost, it being no longer possible to follow the trail. We endured a pretty bad time of it, under canvas, in our mountain-perch; but for our poor beaters it was ten-fold worse—sleeping on the bare ground beneath torrential rains, or under such scant shelter of pine-branches as they could rig up.

We had about a score of these mountaineers in our

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employ — a wild-looking lot, who, when not otherwise engaged, were chiefly *contrabandistas*. Many of these *serranos* had joined our party purely for the love of sport, and for no pay beyond such frugal fare as our camp might afford—scanty enough some days, though good red wine and cigarettes were never wanting. The previous week a somewhat serious affray, we now heard, had taken place close by. A gang of 100 smugglers convoying thirty horse-loads of tobacco, &c., were attacked at the passage of the Guadiarro by a force of fifty carabineers. Many shots were exchanged, the smugglers being armed with Remingtons, with the result that seven men were killed and many others wounded. The whole of the thirty cargoes were eventually captured, but the horses escaped, the smugglers cutting the girth-ropes; nor were any prisoners made. This information was given us by the Colonel of carabineers commanding the district, whom we met a few days later in Estepona.

Here is another reflex of local character—a cutting from a Malaga paper of April 1st, 1891, among the ordinary items of local news :—

"Bandido.—The Civil Guard of Malaga encountered on Wednesday, near Cöin, the celebrated bandit Mena, who has long held the whole of that district in terror. The individuals of the Civil Guard demanded his surrender, to which summons he replied with the discharge of his weapon. This brought on a ferocious struggle, resulting in the death of the freebooter, who received two bullet-wounds from his aggressors."

Such tendencies become infectious, and, as a relief to the tedium of forced inactivity, and wet days under canvas —for the flooded *gargantas* made sport impossible—it occurred to one restless spirit that we might ourselves embark in this popular business of *bandolerismo*. Had we not a score of bold brigands ready at our hand? And, besides, there was not wanting eminently suitable material for "sequestration"—what a subject for a chapter! But . . . well, the opportunity was thrown away, and, the deluge still continuing, in the morning our smuggler-

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chief, old Marquéz, came in to say that the people, like the Israelites of old, wished to depart, each man to his own house—"cada uno a su casa."

Though we did not succeed in obtaining a really first-

FOREST-IBEX—BERMEJA. (Showing narrower sweep of horn.)

rate ibex-head during this campaign in the southern sierras, yet, judging from two *machos* subsequently secured on an adjacent range (three and five-year-old males respectively), the difference in the form of horn in these

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forest-haunting goats from those of the Alpine sierras is only trifling. Compared with circumference, the horns are of lesser length, and hardly, perhaps, branch out so widely; but that may, after all, be only a question of age.

IBEX-STALKING.—It may occur to the sportsman-reader to observe that we have said very little of ibex-*stalking*. The reason is that, as before mentioned, we have little but negative experiences to relate, having met with no success ourselves in that sport. Both in Andalucia and the Castiles we have followed some of the longest and most severe days' work in search of ibex, but without success. The ibex are relatively *very scarce*, scattered sparsely over vast areas, and rarely to be seen on the move during daylight. It is, of course, in all stalking a first essential that a great extent of country be brought under survey. This implies covering long distances; and the extreme difficulties of locomotion on the Spanish cordilleras forbid this. We do not speak without a basis of comparative experience, having seen something of mountain-game in various lands. It may be that we lack speed of foot in traversing those rugged rock-peaks—we are far from denying this, let those smile who may. Few will do so who have once attempted to seek out and stalk the wild ibex—or it may be only bad luck. At any rate, our hardest days on Nevada or Gredos have not, so far, been rewarded by a single shot, or even by the sight of an ibex in a position where a stalk might be dreamt of.

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IV.—Nevada and the Alpujarras—Ten Days in a Snow-cave.

The grandeur of the Sierra Nevada, with its lofty sky-lines, all white and clean-cut against an azure background, majestic Mulahacen and the Picachos de la Veleta, are familiar objects to most visitors to Southern Spain. The majority, however, are content with the distant view from the palace-fortresses of the Alhambra or the turrets of the Generalife. Few dream of penetrating those alpine solitudes or scaling their peaks, which look so near, yet cost such toil and labour to gain. Yet the labour is repaid, if the traveller has an eye for what is wildest and grandest in nature.

For ourselves, we are not ashamed to admit that these snow-clad sierras possess attractions that transcend in interest even the accumulated art-treasures and wealth of historic and legendary lore that surround the shattered relics of Moslem rule—of an empire-city where for seven centuries the power and faith of the crescent dominated the south-west of Europe, and which formed the home and the centre of mediæval chivalry and culture. These subjects and sentiments, moreover, stand in no need of a historian: they have engaged the sympathy of legion pens, many directed by a grace, a power and a knowledge to which we dream not of aspiring. To us Granada has rather been merely a "base of operations" whence the ibex and lammergeyer might conveniently be studied or pursued.

Of our own experiences amidst the twin heights of Nevada and the Alpujarras we might write: but, in this case, we have preferred to avail ourselves of certain notes for which we are indebted to two good friends and thorough sportsmen, in the hope that the change may be to the reader a pleasing contrast from the *semper ego* otherwise inevitable.

On a bitterly cold March morning we found ourself, as day slowly broke, traversing the outspurs of the sierra—

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on the scene of the great earthquake of 1884, evidences of which were plentiful enough among the scattered hill-villages. Already many mule-teams, heavily laden with merchandise from the coast-town of Motril, were wending their laborious way inland. It is worth noting that in front of five or six laden mules it is customary to harness a single donkey. This animal does little work: but always passes approaching teams on the proper side, and, moreover, picks out the best parts of the road. This enables the driver to go to sleep, and the plan, we were told, is a good one.

At Lanjaron we breakfasted at the ancient *fonda* of San Rafael, where the bright and beautifully polished brass and copper cooking utensils hanging on the walls were a sight to make a careful housewife envious. We watched our breakfast cooked over the charcoal-fire, and learned a good deal thereby. We were delayed here a whole day by snow-storms. There is stabling under the *fonda* for 500 pack-animals, for Lanjaron in its "season" is an important place, frequented by invalids from far and near. Its mineral-springs are reputed efficacious: but the drainage arrangements are villainous in the extreme, and altogether it seemed a village to be avoided. Sad traces of the cholera were everywhere visible, many doors and lintels bearing the ominous sign: it was curious that in so few cases had it been erased.

We left before daybreak, and a few leagues further on the ascent became very steep and abrupt, the hill-crests whither we were bound within view, but wreathed in mist. Only one traveller did we meet in the long climb from Orjiva to Capileira, and he bringing two mule-loads of dead and dying sheep, worried by wolves just outside Capileira the night before. Expecting that the wolves would certainly return, we prepared to wait up that night for them: but were dissuaded, the argument being "that is exactly what they will expect! No, those wolves will probably not come back this winter." But return they did, both that night and several following. The night before we left Capileira on the return journey (a fortnight

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later), they came in greater numbers than ever and killed over twenty sheep.

Capileira is the highest hamlet in the sierra, and is celebrated for its hams, which are cured in the snow. Here we put up for the night, sleeping as best we could amidst fowls and fleas, after an amusing evening spent around the fire, where one pot cooked for forty people besides ourselves. The cold was intense, streams of fine snow whirling in at pleasure through the crazy shutters: so we were glad to go to bed—indeed I was chased thither by a hungry sow on the prowl, seeking something to eat, apparently in my portmanteau.

Heavy snow-falls that night and all next day prevented our advance: but at an early hour on the following morning we were under way—six of us—on mules, though I would have preferred to walk, the snow being so deep one could not see where the edges of the precipices were. No sooner had I mounted than the mule fell down, while crossing a hill-torrent, and I was glad to find the water no deeper. After climbing steadily upwards all the morning, the last two hours on foot, the snow knee-deep, we at length sighted the cairn on the height to which we were bound. Before nightfall we had reached the point, but few of the mules accomplished the last few hundred yards. After bravely trying again and again, the poor beasts sank exhausted in the snow, and we had to carry up the impedimenta ourselves in repeated journeys. The deep snow, the tremendous ascent, and impossibility of seeing a foothold made this porterage most laborious: but we had all safely stowed in our cave before sundown.

The overhanging rock, which for the next ten or twelve days was to serve as our abode, we found a mass of icicles. These we proceeded to clear away, and then by a good fire to melt our ice-enamelled rock-ceiling, fancying that the constant drip on our noses all night might be unpleasant. The altitude of our ledge above sea-level was about 8,500 feet, and our plateau of rest—our home, so to speak—measured just seven yards by two.

Early next morning we proceeded to erect snow-screens

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at favourable passes, wherein to await the wild-goats as they moved up or down the mountain-side at dawn and dusk respectively, their favourite food being the rye-grass which the peasants from the villages below contrive to grow in tiny patches—two or three square yards scattered here and there amidst the crags. It is only by rare industry that even so paltry a crop can be snatched at such altitudes, and during the short period when the snow is absent from the southern aspects. At present it enveloped everything—not a blade of vegetation, nor a mouthful for a wild-goat could be seen.

Although in going to our *puestos* during the day the snow was generally soft—the sun being very hot—yet in returning after dark we found the way most dangerous, traversing a sloping, slippery ice-surface like a huge glacier, where a slip or false step would send one down half a mile with nothing to clutch at or to save oneself. Such a slide meant death, for it could only terminate in an awful precipice or in one of those horrible holes with a raging torrent to receive one in its dark abyss, and convey the fragments beneath the snow—where to appear next? Each step had to be cut with a hatchet, or hollowed—the butt of a rifle is not intended for such work, but has had to perform it.

Every day here we saw goats on or about the snow-fields and towering rocks above our cave. They were of a light fawn colour, very shaggy in appearance, some males carrying magnificent long horns. One old ram seemed to be always on the watch, kneeling down on the very verge of a crag 500 or 600 yards above us, and which commanded a view for miles—*miles*, did we say? paltry words! From where that goat was, he could survey half-a-dozen provinces.

These ibex were quite inacessible, and though daily seen, nearly a week had passed away ere a wild-goat gave us a chance. One night shortly after quitting my post, little better than a human icicle, and not without fear of the dangers of scrambling cave-wards, in absolute darkness along the ice-slope, a little herd of goats passed—mere

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shadows—within easy shot of where, five minutes before, I had been lying in wait. On another morning at dawn the tracks of a big male showed that he, too, must have passed at some hour of the night within five-and-twenty yards of the snow-screen.

But it was not till a whole week had elapsed that we had the ibex really in our power. Just as day broke a herd of eight—two males and six females—stood not forty yards from our cave-dwelling. The fact was ascertained by one Esteban, a Spanish sportsman whom we had taken with us. Silently he stole back into the cave, and without

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a word, or disturbing the dreams of his still sleeping employers, picked up an "express" and went forth. Then the loud double report at our very doors—that is, had there been a door—aroused us, only to find . . . . the spoor of that enormous ram, the spot where he had halted, listening, close above the cave, and the splash of the lead on the rock beyond—*eighteen inches* too low! an impossible miss for any one used to the "express." Oh, Esteban, Esteban! what were our feelings towards you on that fateful morn!

Life in a mountain-cave high above the level of perpetual snow—six men huddled together in the narrow space, two English and four Spaniards—has its weird and picturesque, but it has also its harder side. Yet those days and nights, passed amidst majestic scenes and strange wild beasts, have left nothing but pleasant memories, nor have their hardships deterred one of us from repeating the experiment. Probably both these campaigns were too early in the season (March and April).

The only birds seen in the high sierra were choughs and ravens: ring-ouzels a little lower down. There were plenty of trout, though small, in the hill-burns. On one occasion we witnessed an extraordinary circular rainbow across a deep gorge, with our own figures perfectly reflected in the centre on passing a given point.

The ice-going abilities of the mountaineers were something marvellous—incredible save to an eye-witness. Across even a north drift, hard and "slape" as steel, and hundreds of yards in extent, these men would steer a sliding, slithering course at top speed, directed towards some single projecting rock. To miss that refuge might mean death: but they did not miss it, ever, in their perilous course, making good a certain amount of forward movement. At that rock they would settle in their minds the next point to be reached, quietly smoking a cigarette meanwhile before making a fresh start. How such performances diminish one's own self-esteem! How weak are our efforts! Even on the softer southern drifts, what

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balancing, what scrambling and crawling on hands and knees one finds necessary, and what a "cropper" one would have come but for the friendly arm of Enrique, who, as he arrests one's perilous slide, merely mutters "Ave Maria purissima!"

* * * * * *

Now we have left the ice and snow and the ibex to wander in peace over their lonely domains. To-night we have dined at a *table:* there is a cheery fire in the rude little *posada* and merry voices, contrasting with the silence of our cave, where no one spoke above a whisper, and where no fire was permissible save once a day to heat the *olla.* Now all we need is a song from the Murillo-faced little girl who is fanning the charcoal-embers. "Sing us a couplet, Dolores, to welcome us back from the snows of Alpujarras!"

Dolores: With the greatest pleasure, *Caballero*, if José will play the guitar. No one plays like José, but he is tired, having travelled all day with his mules from Lanjaron.

José: No, señor, not tired, but I have no soul to-night to play. This morning they asked me to bring medicine from the town for Carmen: but when I reached the house she was dead. I find myself very sad.

Dolores: "Pero, si ya tiene su palma y su corona?" . . . . but as she already has her palm and her crown?

José: That is true! Bring the guitar and I will see if it will quit me of this *tristeza!*

Next morning the snow prevented our leaving: and the day after, while riding away, we met some of the villagers carrying poor Carmen to the burial-ground on the mountain-side. The body, plainly robed in white, was borne on an open bier, the hands crossed and head supported on pillows, thus allowing the long unfettered hair to hang down loose below. It was an impressive and a picturesque scene; and as I rode on, the rejoinder of Dolores came to my mind—"Ya tiene su palma y su corona."

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CHAPTER XIV.

TROUT AND TROUTING IN SPAIN.

A LAND without Trout labours, in our eyes, under grave physical disadvantages; its currency is, metaphorically, below par, its stocks at a discount. The absence of many modern luxuries in Spain—say, manhood suffrage, school-boards, and the like—we can survive; the absence of trout, never. Not even the presence on mountain, moor, or marsh, of such noble denizens as Spain can boast—the ibex, bustard, and boar, the lynx and lammergeyer—can wholly, from an angler's point of view, fill the void, or atone for the absence of sparkling streams and that gamest of fresh-water game, the trout. The reproach, however, does not apply; for, to her many sporting treasures, Spain can claim, in addition, this gem of the subaqueous world. No one, however, it should be added, who has other lands open to him, should ever go to Spain expressly for trout-fishing.

Subject to the provisoes that follow (fairly extensive ones, too), trout may be said to exist sporadically all over the Iberian Peninsula; but, in the south, they are limited to the alpine streams of the sierras, and seldom descend below the 2,000 feet level. Troutlets abound in the mountain-torrents of the loftiest southern sierras (Nevada, Morena, Ronda, and all their infinite ramifications), the larger fish seeking rather lower levels and deeper pools. Three-pounders grace the classic streams of Genil and Darro, and deserve attention from angling visitors to the famed Moorish fortress of Boabdil and his dark-eyed houris. The Guadiarro, also, and some others of the

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Mediterranean rivers, afford shelter, in their middle and upper waters, to *Salmo fario*.

In the sluggish, mud-charged rivers of the corn-plains, and of the upland plateaux, the trout, of course, finds no place. The finned inhabitants of these regions, so far as our limited knowledge goes, are the shad (*sábalo*) and coarse fish, such as dace (*lisa*) and his congeners, with monster eels, crayfish, and the like. But as the rock-ramparts of the Castiles and Northern Estremadura are approached, our speckled friend again appears. Beneath the towering sierras of Gredos and Avila we have landed him while resting from the severer labours of ibex-hunting on the heights above.

These upland streams of Castile run crystal-clear, with alternate pools and rapids in charming sequence. Many closely resemble our moorland burns of Northumbria—even the familiar sandpiper, the white-chested dipper, and the carol of the sky-lark (a note unheard in Southern Spain), are there to heighten the similitude; but here, heather and bracken are replaced by *bresos* and *piornales*—shrubs whose English names (if they have any) we know not. The trout run smaller in inverse ratio of the altitude; in a stream at 3,000 feet the best averaged four to the pound; in another, barely below snow-level, six or eight would be required to complete that weight—small enough, but welcome as a change, both of sport and fare. Who, but an angler, though, can appreciate the heaven-sent joys of casting one's lines on "fresh streams and waters new"?

This watershed marks the southern limit at which (within our observation) the art of fly-fishing is practised by Spanish anglers—of their more usual modes of taking the trout, we treat anon. Fly-fishing, did we say? Fishing with fly would be a more accurate definition; the moment a trout seizes the rudely-tied feathers, he is jerked out, regardless of size or sport—the tackle used, it goes without saying, is of the strongest and coarsest. To play and land a trout *secundum artem* was, we were assured, impossible, by reason of the *malésas*—weeds, snags, and

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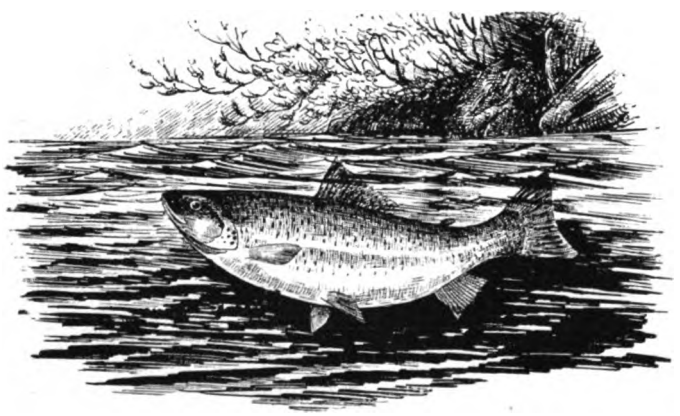
rocks, which stud the arcana of the depths. But it fell to our lot to demonstrate to our worthy friends that this theory was untenable. With a light twelve-foot bamboo, and on gut finer far than ever entered a Spanish angler's dream (though it all comes from Catalonia), we had the satisfaction of raising, playing, and landing sundry creels-full of shapely fish that exceeded, both as to numbers and weight, the best local performances in manifold proportion. Do not, kind reader, attribute egotistic motives for this statement. No great measure of skill was required to treble or quadruple the natives' takes; and any angler



will say at once that such was just the result that might have been expected. While we write, comes a letter from that out-of-the-world spot, asking for a supply of our English gut and flies.

In Portugal also—save on the monotonous levels of the Alemtejo and Algarve—the trout exists in nearly all suitable localities—that is, they are confined to the streams of the hill-country of the north. Years ago, on the virgin rivers of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho, our friend Mr. J. L. Teage enjoyed good sport with trout and gillaroo. It was indeed, to some extent, the success of his *mosca encantada* that helped to arouse the slumbering utilitarian greed of

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the simple Lusitanian peasant, who, seeing, or thinking that he saw, an undreamed source of wealth in his rivers, borrowed of his Basque and Galician neighbours their deadly systems of poison and dynamite, and proceeded forthwith to kill the goose that laid this golden egg. As a natural result, at the present day many of the waters of Northern Portugal are all but depopulated—hardly a sizeable fish can now be taken where four or five-pounders swam of yore.

It is, however, the northern provinces of Spain, the Asturias and Cantabrian highlands, and the rivers that run into Biscay, that form the true home of Iberian *Salmonidæ*. Here, in a land of towering mountains, pine-clad and mist-enshrouded, and of rushing, rapid streams, are found both the salmon, the sea-trout, and the yellow trout.*

Of the Salmon (*Salmo salar*) in Spain, we have had no experience, and will say nothing more than that the southernmost limit of its range appears to be the river Minho, on the frontier of Portugal, and that the resistless energy of British sportsmen has succeeded (despite the local difficulties referred to later) in acquiring fishing rights of no small excellence. Nor have we fished specially for the sea-trout, which are killed with fly and other sporting lures, both in the upper streams and in the brackish waters of the tideways, all along the Biscayan coast, commencing to "run" in February. Some of their habits appear here to differ from what we observe at home; but, without more precise knowledge, we prefer to pass them by for the present.

No more lovely trouting waters can angling introspect conceive than some of those in Northern Spain. Now surging through some tortuous gorge in successive pools, dark, and foam-flecked, each of which look like "holds" for monsters; now opening out on a hill-girt plateau, where the current broadens into rippled shallows, with long-tailed runs and hollowed banks, the Cantabrian rivers offer promises all too fair. For the

* Specific names not guaranteed.

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unfortunate trout has no fair play meted out to him in this hungry land. No count is taken of his noble qualities, nor of his economic necessities. Poor *Salmo fario* is here simply a comestible, and nothing more. In season and out, throughout the twelvemonth, he is persecuted—done to death with nets, poison, and dynamite. We have elsewhere remarked on the paradoxical character of the Spanish *cazador*, and that of the *pescador* is the same. Though observant of his quarry, apt, intelligent, and highly skilled in the arts of sport, yet he is not a sportsman in the truer sense of the term. His object is utilitarian, not sentimental—he cultivates knowledge and the practices of field-craft simply that he may fill the *puchero*.

A large proportion of the adult male population of each riverside hamlet in Northern Spain are *pescadores*—professional fishermen: and all day long one sees them grovelling among the stones of the river-bed fixing those hateful funnel-nets that, at night, entrap the luckless trout as they wander over the shallows. But if they confined their operations to these, and to the infinite variety of nets of other shapes and forms that festoon the village street, things might not be so bad, nor the case of the trout so hopeless and desperate. They have far more deadly devices for massacre by wholesale. Into the throat of some lovely stream is tipped a barrow-load of quicklime: down goes the poisonous dose, dealing out death and destruction to every fish, great or small, in that stream: and, if that is not enough, or if the pool is long and sullen, he proceeds to blow up its uttermost depths with dynamite. And in the hot summer months, when the streams, at lowest summer-level, run almost dry, the heaviest trout are decimated by "tickling."

These methods prevail in every part of Spain and Portugal where trout or other edible fish exist. What chance have they to live?

There are, moreover, difficulties, either of law or of custom, that, in some parts of Spain, render the preservation of rivers troublesome, if not impossible. Hence the poor Spanish Salmonidæ can hardly hope to receive

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that ægis of kindly protection that has been so advantageously (for them, and others) extended to their British and Scandinavian congeners.

Another drawback—which, though common to most lands, is specially pronounced in metalliferous Spain—lies in the noxious effusions from mines, which are freely discharged, for private profit, into public waters. This evil was forcibly brought home by our first day's experience in Cantabria. Hour after hour we had plied most lovely water without success—fly, worm, and phantom alike failed to elicit a single response. On returning with empty creel to the *posada*, to us our host, "*Hombre*, have you been fishing the Tesarco? *Que disparate!* there is a copper-mine two leagues further up: there have been no fish in that river for years." Considering that we had employed a local guide, furnished by the said host, the occasion appeared to justify a protest of not unmeasured wrath. But there is no use losing one's temper in Spain: no quality there so valuable as patience: and the reward of a modicum of reasoned restraint was that the rough, but kind-hearted Asturian insisted next morning on accompanying us himself to another river, seven miles away, where we enjoyed, for Spain, excellent sport.

Under the adverse conditions above outlined, it would be irrational to look for any very great measure of success in Spanish trouting—though, were it possible (which it is not) to secure fair play for the Salmonidæ, there is no physical or other reason why the Basque and Biscayan provinces might not rival either Scotch or Scandinavian waters. The following brief records of a few experiences in Northern Spain will serve to illustrate what may be expected, in a sporting sense, of the Cantabrian trout.

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Santandér (Provincia).

The Province of Santandér, hardly less wild and mountainous than the Asturias, presents somewhat similar conditions of water, fish, and sport. The Cantabrian range, extending from Pyrenees to Atlantic, the common southern boundary of all the Biscayan provinces, attains in Santandér some of its greatest elevations, including the celebrated Picos de Europa (9,000 feet), the home of the Spanish bear and chamois. The trend of the land dips gradually from these inland heights towards the sea: yet even on the coast the scenery is savage and grand, some of the altitudes being very great. The view looking across the magnificent harbour of Santandér recalls in the "Sunny South" the scenery of Arctic Norway, with all the fantastic tracery of snow-mountains and jagged peaks vividly reflected in the unruffled breadths of the fjord.

The rivers, of course, reflect the characteristics of the land. Born of the mountain and the snow-field, they come leaping and surging seawards, dancing to their own wild music, as they crush through narrow gorges, by crag and hanging wood, hurrying ever northward towards the Biscayan sea. The angler's path along their banks is no made road: often for miles, ay, leagues, he may be constrained to follow the goatherds' upland path—a *camino de perdices* in native phrase—and only able to gaze down, like Tantalus, on tempting streams, perhaps close beneath, yet far beyond his reach.

Here, as elsewhere, success, we found, was not to be had for the wooing, nor at the first time of asking. Rivers that offered fair promise—beautiful waters, such as Besaya and Saja, embedded amidst ilex and chestnut, where moss-

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grown rocks impended darkly pools, whereon foam-flakes slowly revolved, or the more rapid streams of Reinosa, full of cataracts and tearing "races" that eat away their steep gravel-banks—all these *may* prove blank, or a long day's work be only rewarded by a few insignificant troutlets or par.

While fishing in the Reinosa district, we were told by our host that there lived some few leagues away *un Inglés muy aficionado*—a fishing enthusiast. Thither we moved our quarters: our new-made friend was one of those Anglo-Saxon Crusoes whom one meets with, self-buried, for one reason or another, in the recesses of wild lands, where sport or solitude may be enjoyed in degrees not possible at home. Retired from a public service through an infirmity begotten by the incidence of his duties, he was spending the prime of life in this remote spot, satisfied with an environment of Nature's purest scenes and with a modicum of sport to reconcile him to exile. A type of the British sportsman abroad was X., keen almost to a fault, little apt to measure success solely by results, a hard day's work was not deemed ill-rewarded by a brace or two of red-legs, or half a dozen quail, while for the chance of a boar he would walk well-nigh half the night, to reach by dawn the point where the retreat of some old tusker, which was ravaging the peasants' crops, might perchance be cut off.

There were six or eight miles to walk on the morrow ere a line was wetted—at first along a highway, whence X. plunged *in medias res*, that is into a rough strath, horrid with shifting shingle and thorny scrub, where progress was painful enough: but our companion never slacked speed, and when he continued his wild career, unchecked, through a brawling torrent full of boulders and well-nigh waist-deep, with a current like a mill-race, doubts of his sanity began to arise: or was he only testing us? Soon afterwards, providentially, we reached the main stream: fair trouting water, with rather too much current, the runs being almost continuous, and leaving scant space of "slack." Here we set up our rods:

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the first seething pool yielded a brace, besides false rises, and in half an hour we had "creeled" several and began to hope for better things. But it was not to be.

The trout here were white, or silvery in colour, more like salmon-smolts—none of the deep greens, violets and gold of our home fish—and rose extremely shy, coming so short that hardly one in three gave a chance of getting fast. It was not that they rolled over the flies, or merely "flicked" at them—they simply came so short that, unless self-hooked, they were gone almost ere they had come. A dozen trout was the result of this day, yet our companion told us he had not, during two years, made a better basket. Oh, tantalizing streams and provoking troutlets of Biscaya!

Pleasant days, nevertheless, were those spent by this wild riverside. The love of sport is strong in our breasts, but it is not the sole, or an all-potent factor therein. Other things are strong to charm, and here the scenery and accompaniments lacked nothing of beauty and interest —the grand hills, not high but severe in jagged skylines and escarpments that shone like marble in the sun. The air resounded with the music of leaping waters, with the merry carol of Sandpiper and gentler warble of Whinchat: and further off the soaring flight of Buzzard and Raven lent life to the silent hills.* From rock-crannies, splashed with the spray of trickling rivulets from above, peeped bouquets of gentian and maiden-hair: the stony "haughs" glowed with bloom of purple iris and asphodel, anemones and wild geraniums, orchids, heaths, ferns, and wild-flowers of a hundred kinds unknown to us.

The weather of the Cantabrian spring-time is strangely variable: every day we had spells of sunshine and shower, wind and calm, fog and fair alternately, often culminating in a sudden clap of thunder that rolled majestically along the deep ravines. Then, for an hour, came down the rain in torrents, and we sought the shelter of some village *venta* where, for a *peseta*, we fared sumptuously on good

* We found a nest of the Sandpiper (*Totanus hypoleucus*) with four nearly fresh eggs on May 23rd—Provincia de Santandér.

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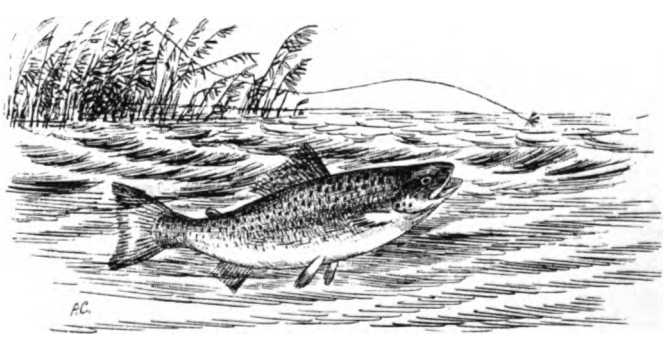
white bread and the delicious cream-like cheese known as *queso de Burgos*, washed down with the rough red wine of Rioja, cheaper than "smallest beer," and most refreshing.

In every hamlet hung fishing-nets: every day we saw the "fishermen" fixing them, and heard of two-pounders. Yet to us, striving with all the skill we possess, appeared none of these leviathans. Nothing we could do availed to cajole them—that is, assuming their existence. A basket of one to two dozen trout daily, including sundry half-pounders, appeared to be the measure of the river's capacity, or of our skill.

Our best basket in this Province of Santandér was twenty-eight trout, weighing eight and a half pounds, and the best fish a fine trout of just over the pound. Him we killed in a deep pool so embedded amidst crags and so difficult of access, that it may be doubted whether feathered fly had ever before flown over its virgin depths. Our friend rose boldly to a small "red palmer": and within a few minutes two more, of hardly inferior weight, had joined him in the basket.



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CHAPTER XV.

TROUTING IN THE ASTURIAS AND IN LEON.

The wide pastoral province of Leon, with its unexplored wilds of the Vierzo and the Maragateria, and many another savage region bordering on the southern slopes of the Galician and Cantabrian highlands, is practically a *terra incognita* to British sportsman and naturalist. Well would Leon repay either of these for the enterprise expended on its exploration. Mountain and plain afford shelter for game—large and small—of all the kinds native to Spain; while the rivers flowing southwards from the Asturian ranges probably afford as good trout-fishing as any in the Peninsula.

Our own experiences in Leon were limited, as regards its trouting capacities, to a mere flying visit, when we alighted one morning in mid-May, at a wayside station in North Leon, tempted to break a monotonous journey by the trout-like appearance of a stream that, for some distance, had run more or less parallel with the railway.

The country immediately adjacent was not attractive; flat, tawny, and arid, with few trees and very partial cultivation. On either bank, at a mile or two's distance, rose ranges of low broken hills, gradually increasing in height as they closed in upon the river. Here and there stood scattered hamlets, all built of the yellowish sun-baked brick characteristic of Leon; the houses huddled together, and usually enclosed by the remnants of a former wall or fortification.

It was nearly noon ere we reached the waterside, at the head of a long stretch of deep, still water, fringed on the opposite shore with canes and bulrushes, and well rippled by a strong breeze. The sun-glare was intense; and,

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though the wind enabled us to command the whole water, an hour's fishing (with fly) only resulted in the capture of sundry large silvery coarse fish, resembling dace, and weighing from half a pound to a pound and a quarter, and a few small fry—we imagine, bleak. We therefore decided to walk up-stream three or four miles, to the point where its course joined one of the hill-ranges just mentioned. Here, in many places, abrupt limestone crags formed the farther shore; beneath, the stream ran deep, bright, and sparkling, shallowing away to the shelving gravel on our shore, and at each bend forming a pretty pool.

For a long time this likely water produced actually nothing, and we began to fear that our venture in stopping at this outlandish spot was a failure. But as the shadows lengthened and the sun left the water, there came a change. The long-expected and welcome sensation of a determined "rise" was followed by another and another in quick succession; and in the last hour of the day we landed nineteen trout, weighing between seven and eight pounds, of which aggregate the three largest accounted for one-third.

Fully half the trout killed on this and succeeding days rose to a small orange hackle; a bracken-clock, or "coch-y-bondu," as we believe is the proper name, being the next favourite. Winged flies should be small, and of bright colours, and, in the clear waters of Spain, only the finest gut should be used.

Further west, in the Astorga and Ponferrada districts, are probably the best streams of Leon; but these we have not had time to visit.

THE ASTURIAS.—This province is to Spain what the Scotch Highlands are to England—a

> Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood.

From the north, the Asturias may be reached by sea; but on the south the only pass through the continuous mountain-ranges which cut off this rugged province from Leon and transmontane Spain, is by the *puertos* of

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Vegarada and Piedrafita, which lead into the upland valleys of the Pajáres mountains, one of the chief strongholds of the Spanish bear, and where boar, chamois, and other game are also found.

The extremely abrupt and rugged nature of the river-valleys is, in some sense, a serious drawback to the angler. Many a lovely pool or stretch of perfect trouting-water are absolutely inaccessible—cut off for ever in the depths of some precipitous defile. Broken boulders often impend the river's course for miles, and hopelessly obstruct descent. In other places the water-side can at length be reached after perilous scrambles along rock-ledges, threading the rod through a maze of birch and alder branches. And one picks a precarious path downwards with the knowledge that, even when reached, the range of fishable water will be limited, and the return journey almost worse than the descent.

These hardly-gained pools are, however, worth the trouble of trying. For, in proportion to their difficulty of access, so are they neglected by the native *pescador*, with all his poaching paraphernalia and hateful engines of destruction.

Our first essay proved blank; the season (May) was, perhaps, too early, and only a few silvery troutlets rewarded a long day's work. This was a small stream, overhung with magnificent chestnuts; but a neighbouring and larger river afforded, for Spain, fair sport. The first series of pools yielded a dozen trout, averaging half a pound. Then came the usual scramble to reach the next fishable bit. While climbing out, over a chaos of tumbled boulders, we almost stepped on a big Marten (*Mustela martes*, Linn.), which bounded from under foot, up the rocks; then turned, and stood chattering savagely at the intruder, her yellow chest not twenty yards away. Probably she had her brood hidden in some crevice, but we could see nothing of them.

Thus, half fishing, half struggling with geological obstructions, we had accumulated a basket of thirty odd trout, when we observed in the glen below a stretch of

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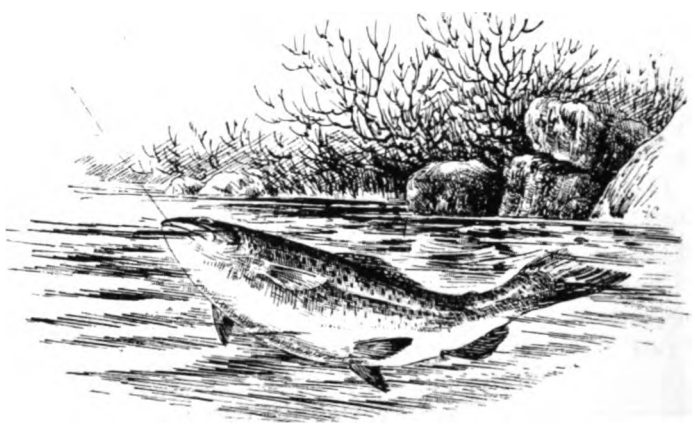
lovely water. There were four pools, each debouching into the next in a strong stream that ruffled half the pool below. But the river ran in a deep ravine, the descent was worse than ever, and for some time it was doubtful if we should ever stand on that virgin shore. We succeeded, however; and presently, across the throat of the upper "run," extended the cast of stone-fly, black gnat, and orange-red spider—possibly the first that ever swept the stream. In a moment we were fast in a trout of the first rank, which had seized the upper fly. His defence was sullen and strong, slowly moving round the pool; then he twice threw himself a



"VANQUISHED."

clear yard out of water—a grand silver-clad trout. The end came in due course, but unhastened, and having no net, no risks were run till he rolled over on his glittering side, and could safely be towed in shore, and "docked" in a shallow creek. This trout (one of our best in Spain) was a thick and shapely fish of rather under three pounds, pal in colour, almost silvery, with delicate orange blush, which hardly extended to the fins. He was fairly crammed with creeper, or larvæ of stone-fly (in Spanish, *coco*), yet had fallen a victim to the similitude of the perfect insect—the only large fish, by the way, killed on this fly, the majority preferring the small orange-hackle.

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In the same pool we killed two more—a half-pounder, with a smaller fish on the same cast; while the three lower pools yielded nine trout, three averaging a pound apiece, two of three-quarters, and four of minor dimensions—making a total for the day of forty-four trout.

This last short hour's work had realized some ten pounds' weight of fish—the best sport with the trout-rod the writer ever enjoyed in Spain.

THE GAME-BIRDS OF THE ASTURIAS.—It may be appropriate, before leaving this northern province, to add a few lines on its game-birds, which differ greatly from those of the south of Spain.

First comes the Capercaillie, which is spread along the whole Cantabrian range, though in no great numbers, and rarely seen in spring, when they lie extremely close in the densest thickets of the forests. We only raised three or four during many long rambles through the Asturian forests in search of Bruin. The Asturian name is "el Faisan."

Ptarmigan are found in the Pyrenees, but do not seem to extend further west than the province of Navarre. Manuel de la Torre assured us that there was, in the Asturias, a *Perdiz grisa* which lived exclusively in the woods, a tame bird, lying very close, and in autumn flying in bands. Could this be the Hazel-grouse? According to Arévalo, that species is only found in the Pyrenees.

Our familiar Grey Partridge (a bird entirely unknown in the south) we also met with both in the Pyrenees and the Asturias, where it is not uncommon; but is said not to pass southward of the great cordillera of Leon. In this country, the Grey Partridge is confined to the higher regions of the sierras, only coming down with the snow to the *faldas*, or foothills, in winter, and is *never* found on the plains as at home.

One other bird peculiar to this region, though not game, deserves a remark: the Great Black Woodpecker (*Picus martius*), which is found distributed along all the northern forests. It is, however, very scarce—though least so in the Peñas de Europa.

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CHAPTER XVI.

EXPERIENCES WITH EAGLES.

I.—Forest and Plain.

With her vast expanses of sierra and lonely scrub-clad wastes, scarcely inhabited save by ill-tended herds of cattle or goats, but abounding in wild-life—furred, feathered, and scaled—Spain affords conditions peculiarly favourable to raptorial animals. Of the eagle-tribe some eight or nine species are recognized as belonging to the Spanish avi-fauna—some peculiar to the mountain-region, others to the steppe and prairie, as we now proceed to explain. We have ourselves shot all the different kinds of eagle, save two, which are comparatively scarce and irregular stragglers to the Peninsula—namely, *Haliæetus albicilla* and *Aq. nævia*.

The first of the tribe to attract our attention was the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti* of R. Brehm), one of the handsomest of European species, a few pairs of which still inhabit most of the wilder provinces of Central and Southern Spain, though their numbers in Andalucia have been grievously reduced since we first met with them in 1872. To shoot this bird was long an ambition of the writer, the attainment of which cost many a long week of hard work, hard fare, and more than one bitter disappointment. All attempts in those earlier days to approach the Imperial Eagle on the open plains which form its favourite home proved futile; though on many occasions we fell in with the bird conspicuously perched, according to its habit during the mid-day heats, on some dead tree or the top of a pine. In later years we have

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succeeded in this feat, but at that time the most carefully executed "stalk" invariably failed for one reason or another; nor could the eagle be beguiled to come to a bait. Nothing remained but to take what is perhaps an unfair advantage. On April 16th we found a nest, a broad platform of branches built on the very summit of a towering *alcornoque*. Beneath this, in a hut of cistus-twigs, a prey to myriad mosquitoes, I awaited the eagle's return. Slowly passed some hours of torture before she re-appeared, took one wide circuit around, and descended with a rush like a whirlwind upon her eyry, completely disappearing from view within its ample circumference. This event I had not foreseen, and hoped to kill the eagle in the act of alighting. Now it only remained to put her off. Gently I removed my boots, crept from the hut, and walked round the tree—a mountain of green foliage. From no other point was the great nest visible; so I braced up my nerves and shouted. There followed a slight rustling; then the huge wings extended, and for a single instant I saw, through intervening foliage, the whole of the coveted symmetrical form, ere she wheeled back across the tree. A No. 1 cartridge crashed through the branches; a shower of leaves and black feathers floated in the air—instinctively I felt the blow must be mortal, though no vital spot had been presented. Intense was my joy when next she appeared, to see the eagle slanting downwards towards the earth. There she recovered an even keel; the second barrel, too careless perhaps, had no effect, and the great bird slowly flap - - flapped away. Each moment I watched for her collapse, but she still held on, on, across the open, and behind some distant trees was lost to view. Then the iron entered my soul, nor was it any solace to hear, some time afterwards, that that very afternoon my eagle had been found by a couple of *carabineros;* not till a fortnight later was the useless corpse recovered.

It was the 6th of May before we found another nest in a distant *dehesa*—again built on an *alcornoque* (cork-oak), the highest of a clump bordering a small swamp. This eagle sat close, not moving till I stood ready beneath.

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Then she rose to her feet and I shot as she stood on the nest. She sprang buoyantly upwards, ignoring a second charge placed under the wing as she wheeled back: then soared blindly over Felipe, receiving two more cartridges, and after flying some half a mile slowly settled down to earth in a series of descending circles. Sending

SPANISH IMPERIAL EAGLE.

Felipe to recover her, I awaited the return of the male; but the sun was low on the horizon ere my eyes were gladdened by the sight of his majestic flight, directly approaching, and with a rabbit hanging from his claws. With quick "yapping" bark, he perched on an outer branch, and next moment fell, wing-broken, to the ground.

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A magnificent pair they were : their sable-black plumage glossy with purplish iridescent sheen and with snow-white shoulders. On the occiput a patch of pale gold, the crown being black. The feet and cere of this species are pale lemon-yellow; the irides golden, finely reticulated with hazel.

This eyry contained two eaglets, clad in white down. We have since had many opportunities of observing the breeding habits of this species on the wooded plains of Andalucia and Estremadura. The eggs, usually three in number, are mostly white, more or less splashed or spotted with faint evanescent reddish or brown shades, and are laid about the middle of March. The nests of the Imperial Eagle are about four feet across, and invariably placed on the extreme summit of a tall tree—cork-oak or pine—all projecting twigs being broken off so as to offer no obstruction to the sitting bird's view. The nests are flat, lined with fresh twigs and green pine-needles, and all around and beneath lie strewn the skulls of hares and rabbits—a perfect Golgotha. We have also seen the remains of Partridge, Stone-Curlew, Mallard, and wildfowl, but never those of reptiles. These large nests are most difficult to get into; their position affording no hand-hold above, and from the extent to which they overhang, access can only be obtained by a manœuvre analogous to scaling the futtock-shrouds of an old line-of-battle ship.

The Imperial Eagle is exclusively confined to the *plains*—we have never seen it in the mountains: its prey consists almost entirely of rabbits and partridge: it is also said to kill bustards, but this we think improbable, though the bird, no doubt, is powerful enough. Its hunting-grounds are the arid, barren *dehesas* and cistus-wastes—it is not seen on the cornlands frequented by bustard. The adults are recognizable at a long distance by their black plumage and snow-white epaulets—majestic birds of massive, powerful appearance. One also sees on the plains other large and powerful eagles of a rich tawny-chestnut colour—very handsome objects as they sit in the sunshine on some lofty pine.

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What all these large tawny eagles are is not quite clear; or rather, their precise specific status is not yet settled. Several experienced ornithologists scattered throughout the world—Hume, Brooks and Anderson in India, Cullen in Turkey, Saunders, Irby and Lord Lilford in Spain—have studied these birds, but hitherto the investigations of these accomplished naturalists have resulted in qualified, and sometimes clashing opinions. Extreme difficulties beset the study of the eagle-tribe, for the living subjects refuse to be studied, and resent one's most remote propinquity. To go out eagle-shooting is to court failure. Then, owing to their prolonged adolescence and slow changes of plumage, a single eagle may pass through several distinct phases, each more pronounced than those which divide species from species: added to which is the further fact that while the genus contains several well-defined types, yet its minor forms intergrade with perplexing persistency. Without venturing on any dogmatic opinions, we will relate, as a small contribution towards their natural history, such facts as have come under our notice during many years' observation of the Spanish eagles.

To clear the ground, we must first explain that the young of the Imperial Eagle are, in their first plumage, of a uniform, rich tawny chestnut, or *café-au-lait* colour. We have shot beautiful examples in this stage in June and July, when, during the intense mid-day heat, the young eagles are wont to seek the shade of the tree whereon they were hatched. This plumage continues during two or three years—or more: but the original brightness and depth of hue is rapidly lost with age and exposure to the southern sun. In a few months, these young eagles have faded to an almost colourless, "washed-out" shade that appears almost white at a distance.*

Their next stage is to acquire the dark plumage of

* This transformation of colour is well represented (though not designedly so) by the two plates at p. 88 of Dr. Bree's "Birds of Europe" (2nd ed.). The "Tawny Eagle" there figured might be a young Imperial of, say, two months old; while *Aquila culleni*, so far as colour is concerned, would do duty for the same bird at two years.

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maturity—a metamorphosis which probably extends over several years. The black feathers growing gradually and irregularly among the light ones, give the bird, during this period, a peculiar piebald or spotted appearance—(*see* photo below). It is also worth adding, as a curious fact,

IMPERIAL EAGLE. (SPOTTED STAGE.)

that many of the feathers of the wing-coverts, scapulars, &c., show *light on one side* of the shaft, and *dark on the other*. During all this protracted adolescence, it has usually been considered that these eagles did not breed.

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During the winter months in Andalucia one sees many of these tawny-coloured eagles, the majority pale in hue—"washed-out" as Griffon Vultures—(undoubtedly young Imperials)—but there are others, less numerous, of a rich bright chestnut, and some of these, we think, may belong to a different species.

In April, 1883, the writer found a nest of one of these large tawny eagles in the distant Corral de la Cita. It was placed on the summit of a stone-pine, almost covering the broad, bushy top, and we had an excellent view of the old bird, as she rose from the nest about 100 yards away:—*de las coloradas*, = "one of the tawny kind!" as my companion remarked. The place was remote, and night too near to allow of our then awaiting her return (though we *should* have done so at any cost), so, after taking the two eggs (large dusky white, quite spotless), substituting for them a couple of hard-boiled hen's eggs, and setting a circular steel-trap in the nest, we left it. On returning next morning there was no sign of the eagle at the nest. After walking all round, shouting out, and going up an adjacent sand-ridge which all but overlooked it, we were satisfied she was not there, especially as the night before she had risen rather wild. Accordingly we prepared to ascend; but whilst throwing the rope over the lowest branches, a great shadow suddenly glided across the sand beside me, and on looking up, there was the great chestnut-coloured eagle slowly flapping from her nest within fifteen or twenty yards overhead. Before I could drop the rope and run to my gun, the chance was gone; unluckily, however, the shot took some effect, and though it failed to stop the eagle, she went away badly struck, with one leg hanging down, and never returned. Thus, by bad luck, an opportunity of settling a doubtful point was thrown away.

In June of the same year (1883), we obtained a tawny eagle, which we then imagined would be a young Imperial of the year, and being only winged, the bird was placed in the garden at Jerez, where it lived till the autumn of 1885. It was then (at any rate) two and a half years old, and possibly much older, yet it had never changed colour at

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all. The whole plumage was rich tawny chestnut, rather lighter beneath, and the new autumn feathers, which were growing at the time of the bird's death, were also coming bright chestnut, and without a sign of black. This eagle,

TAWNY EAGLE.

which we now have set-up, has also, to our eye, quite a different physical type to *A. adalberti*, old or young, being heavier and more massive in build, beak, and claws—indeed, almost vulturine (*see* photo above). The middle

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toe appears to have four scutellæ, against six (one rudimentary) in *A. adalberti;* tail above uniform dark brown. In captivity it was much noisier, and more *nonchalant*, than the Imperial.

As already mentioned, we have observed these rich-coloured tawny eagles on many occasions during the winter months. The forest-guards distinguish them from the young Imperial Eagles, saying they were most numerous in winter. Casual observation is not, of course, of much value on fine points, and we give their opinion for what it may be worth. The late Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria also appears to have found a tawny eagle nesting in Andalucia ("Sport and Ornithology," p. 491), but did not secure the birds.

It seems probable that a large tawny-coloured eagle—whether the African *A. rapax*, or otherwise—*does* breed in Southern Spain, though sporadically both as to time and place, the wooded districts around Córdova being the most likely locality.

So far, with slight modifications, we have left this chapter as written some little time ago; but, since then, we have had further eagle-experiences (in the spring of 1891), which throw some new light on the vexed questions referred to. For we have now placed beyond doubt the fact that the Spanish Imperial Eagle *does* breed in—what is considered to be—its "immature" dress; but which would probably be more correctly expressed by saying that individuals of this species never develope that black-and-white plumage which has hitherto been regarded as the invariable adult state.

On February 26th we heard of an eagle's nest at a spot called the Algaida del Gato, and were assured that, while the female-owner was black—*de las negras*—her male partner was *pardo, i.e.*, tawny. The date, it may be noted, is just a month earlier than we had imagined these birds usually breed; but on the 28th February this nest certainly contained two white eggs; and, as certainly, the male eagle was *tawny:* his partner an ordinary black-

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plumaged adult. The latter we could have killed half a dozen times; but the male, realizing, it may be, the interesting problem which centred itself on his person, gave us no small trouble ere at last he fell to a long and lucky shot on the wing. His skin now lies before us—pale tawny chestnut in ground colour, sprinkled with darker feathers all over, and with *white shoulders*.

A few days afterwards (March 4th), a second pair were discovered breeding on a big stone-pine in a different district. In this case the *female* was tawny, the male black. We watched the pair, with the glass, at moderate range, for half an hour, and Manuel de la Torre afterwards told us they had passed over his head within twenty yards, leaving no doubt as to their respective colours. There was thus no necessity to shoot them. As it is we fear we may be blamed, for to exterminate a species in order to clear up some obscure fact in its biology is to commit a crime under the guise of science; but we have not been guilty in this or any other instance of needless slaughter; and, in Spain, be it added, eagles are "vermin" upon whose heads a price is set. The few shot by us are now valuable and cherished specimens; otherwise they might, and probably would have, been uselessly destroyed, the beautiful birds left to rot where they fell.

In April we saw a third example in the hands of a naturalist at Malaga—a tawny female (without sign of white on shoulders), which we were told (and do not doubt) was shot from her nest in that province the preceding week.

The veteran Manuel de la Torre, a classic name in Spanish ornithology, and one of the keenest and most observant men we ever met, who has spent the greater part of his seventy years in the destruction of eagles, foxes, wolves, and other *animales dañinos*—noxious beasts—laughed at our enthusiasm over this "discovery," saying that he had known of the fact all his life, and had shot "tawny" Imperials from their nests before we were born! He asserted that these eagles do not ever, necessarily, attain the black state; they may live 100 years and

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yet not advance beyond the tawny, or "piebald" stages. Good luck and long life to this dear old man, whose cheery face and voice and ready guitar have been the life and soul of our camp on some wild nights in the sierra!

SPANISH IMPERIAL EAGLE. (Adult Male, shot May 6th, 1883.)

This discovery leaves the position thus:—The Spanish Imperial Eagle *does* breed indiscriminately, whether in the typical adult livery of black and white, or in any of the various stages of mottled and piebald. But we are still entitled to

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the opinion, hereinbefore expressed, that there *also* breeds —though rarely—in Spain a true *tawny* eagle—*Aq. rapax*, or otherwise. The grounds for this opinion are that the bird we consider to be the Tawny Eagle is of different type and build, besides being of a darker and richer colour—always uniform, whereas the Imperial Eagles breeding in the pale plumage are invariably spotted, or "marbled."

In leaving the Imperial Eagle we annex weights and dimensions of five examples killed by us:—

	Weight.	Expanse.	Length.
Male, adult (tawny) ...	8¾ lbs. ...	75½ in. ...	30 in.
„ „ (black) ...	8½ „ ...	74¾ „ ...	29½ „
Female „ „ ...	9¾ „ ...	80½ „ ...	34½ „
„ „ „ ...	10¼ „ ...	82 „ ...	36 „
„ „ „ ...	10¼ „ ...	82¼ „ ...	36 „

Of the Booted Eagle (*Aquila pennata*) and the Serpent-Eagle (*Circäetus gallicus*), both of which are more or less numerous spring-migrants to Spain, we have treated elsewhere, and need only add that all our specimens of the Booted Eagle (both sexes) are of the *pale* variety with shaded brown back, a broad light bar across either wing, and white, streaked breast.

The Spotted Eagle (*Aquila nævia*) we have never personally met with: though Arévalo (*Aves de España*, p. 58) describes it as not uncommon, nesting in crevices of rocks among the wooded mountains, and frequenting the rice-swamps of Valencia.

The White-tailed Sea-Eagle (*Haliæetus albicilla*) according to Spanish authorities, is also found on passage and in winter. Manuel de la Torre gave us its name as "*Aguila leona*," but we have never seen it in Spain at any season.

On January 4th, 1888, we made the acquaintance of another fine species, one of the largest of the feathered race, under the following circumstances:—We were partridge-shooting, and before our advancing line observed soaring over the plain a pair of enormous birds, which we took for the largest Imperial Eagles we had ever seen. B. had always held that those I had previously shot here (as just related) were of small size, and that there existed, on

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the Andalucian *vega*, eagles of twice their dimensions. Here at last we were in presence of a pair of these stupendous eagles, and my anxiety to take the offensive—however remote or impossible its chance of success—knew no bounds. The pursuit of partridge, quail and hare—even the approaching *avero*—faded into insignificance, and these huge birds monopolized all attention. Presently one—the larger—passed outside the line, and after almost interminable aërial sweeps settled slowly down to the summit of a small wild-olive. At once we called up one of our wild-fowlers, who, with his trained *cabresto* pony, was close at hand. The pony was divested of saddle and bridle, and with only a halter and a cord to his near fore-knee—preparations which told him distinctly enough the nature of the business in hand—was ready for action. Away we went, Vasquez crouching behind the shoulder, myself behind the quarter, and holding with my right hand by his tail. By this device we arrived, unnoticed, to a range of forty yards—nearer we could not get by reason of a marshy creek with steep, slimy banks. I therefore at once despatched the charge of treble A, right for the monster's head. The effect was unmistakable—he rolled over to the shot, and fell to earth. But those huge wings never ceased to work, and a second dose of slugs (on the ground) had no visible effect. From mere spasmodic flapping the great bird gradually recovered control, and a few seconds later was distinctly flying—very low, but still clearly on the wing and departing. For nearly a mile he flapped along, never a yard above the scrub—then settled, on the very edge of the water. We followed, and when I next raised my eyes over the pony's quarter, there, within six yards, stretched out flat on the bare mud, lay our victim. His head lay prostrate, but his eye still brightly watched us. Hard and impervious to shot as I well knew these great raptores to be, I was hardly prepared to see him rise again, and could not have believed what followed. Not only did he rise on wing, but received two more charges of treble A—mould-shot as big as peas—at a range of under twenty yards, without wincing, and after

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that, flew full 200 yards before finally collapsing: then at last he fell, stone-dead.

Our trophy was not an eagle after all! but one of those giant birds, the Black Vulture (*Vultur monachus*), measuring a trifle under ten feet in expanse of wing, and scaling

BLACK VULTURE. (Adult Male, shot January 4th, 1888.)

roughly between two and three stones. I need hardly add that I had at once recognized the species on rising to fire the first time; and though it was somewhat of a disappointment, it at least settled the question respecting these fabulously large eagles. This bird proved a magnificent

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specimen, a male, 9 feet 9 inches across the wings: the irides were dark, legs and feet whitish, claws black: the cere and bare skin in front of neck bluish colour, tail pointed.* The whole plumage was deep black-brown, the head covered with short downy feathers, and the bird had no offensive smell like the common vultures. This species is, indeed, of far nobler aspect than the Griffon, showing in life none of the repulsive bare neck of that bird, the neck being entirely hidden in the ruff of long lanceolate

BLACK VULTURE. "GETTING UNDER WEIGH."

plumes which surround it, and on the wing it has a majestic appearance.

A few days afterwards we had a similar experience with another, which we stalked, sitting amongst some rough hummocky ridges: it seems all but impossible to kill these huge raptores outright. Their hard muscular frames and sinews, tough as steel-wire, appear impervious to shot, and unless a pellet chances to take the wing-bone, they will go on, though struck in a dozen places. One realizes this on attempting to skin one of the

* Now in the Hancock Museum at Newcastle.

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larger eagles—an operation not unlike trying to dissect a piano.

The Black Vulture we have never found actually breeding in Andalucia, though it does do so: and we have observed single pairs, associated with Griffons, in the sierras in May and July. Its chief nesting stronghold is in the Castiles, where, in the Sierra de Gredos, we found an eyry with young in May. This nest was on a pine. In the south the Black Vulture is chiefly a winter bird.

The curious diversity of character displayed by the various raptores when captured, deserves a word of notice. At the end of May, after six or eight weeks' eagle-hunting, we had about a dozen large birds of prey which were kept in a disused room. There was a mighty commotion when any one entered—a couple of Serpent-Eagles ceaselessly flapped and scuffled, while Booted Eagles showed fight, and Marsh-Harriers, backing into convenient corners, stood facing one with outstretched wings, like snarling cats all teeth and claws, and shrieking defiance in wailing tones. The Kites, on the contrary, might all have been dead, so limp and lifeless they lay, flat on the floor, with gaping beak and protruding tongue. One winged Kite we kept alive in the grounds at Jerez for years, but though practically at liberty, he invariably feigned death or deadly sickness when approached. Five minutes afterwards, nevertheless, he was quite game to tackle one of our chickens! In the midst of the din and flutter sat the Imperial Eagle, silent, motionless, and unconcerned; perched on the carcase of a Flamingo, his flat shapely head turned slowly as the keen eye followed every movement of the intruder, whose presence he otherwise disdained. The Tawny Eagle (above mentioned) displayed in captivity even greater *insouciance* and a nobler demeanour than the Imperial, while both birds, heavy and massive as they looked, exhibited marvellous agility in pouncing upon the luckless rat who might presume to trespass upon their domain and attempt to steal their food.

Such are some of our experiences of the eagles of the

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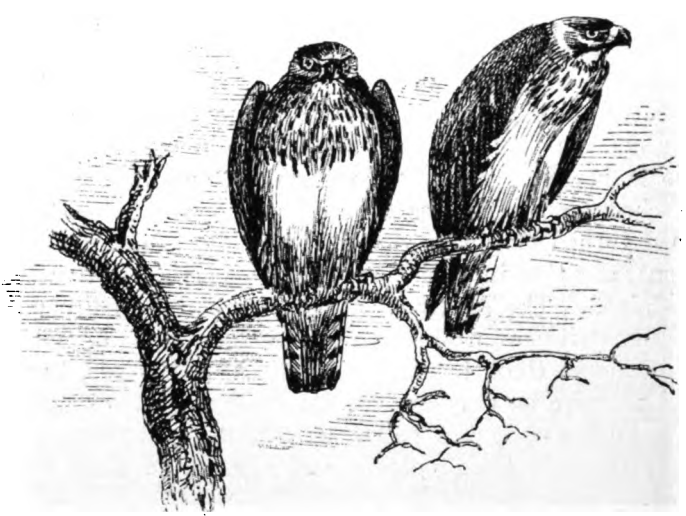
Spanish lowlands. The Imperial Eagle is, *par excellence*, the monarch of the plain—resident throughout the year (though the young are known, occasionally, to cross the Pyrenees into France), and in his varied phases comparatively common. Next in importance comes a large tawny eagle of, as yet, undefined specific rank, which, for the reasons above set forth, we consider entitled to a place in the list. Then, in spring, come the Booted and Serpent-Eagles from Africa to nest on Spanish soil and prey on its abundant reptile-life. But in winter two other species descend from their mountain-homes to prey on the game and wildfowl of the lowlands. These are the Golden Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle—both described more particularly in the next chapter—of which we have shot specimens on the plains during the winter months. The two Golden Eagles now in the Zoological Gardens were both shot by us in the flat country, or *campiña*, in the neighbourhood of Jerez de la Frontera—one winged as it flew to roost in the *pinales* of Los Inglesillos, the other by a chance shot in the rough, broken country beyond Garciagos.



AT ROOST—SERPENT-EAGLES.

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CHAPTER XVII.

FURTHER EXPERIENCES WITH EAGLES AND VULTURES.

II.—Chiefly relating to the Sierra.

On a hot May morning we lay beneath the shade of palms and eucalypti in the garden at Jerez, watching the gyrations of Kestrels, Swifts, and Bee-eaters, and lazily listening to the soft bird-chorus—an infinite, space-filling refrain from myriad Nightingales, Serins, and Goldfinches—to the spondee of Hoopoe and dactyl of Quail. Presently there appeared, far overhead, some half-dozen Griffon Vultures wheeling in immense circles, the huge birds dwarfed by the altitude to mere specks. Then another stratum, still higher, was detected, and afterwards a keen eye distinguished a third, and then a fourth, beyond the average range of human vision. How many more tiers of soaring vultures might yet occupy the regions of unseen space beyond, cannot be told: but the incident serves to illustrate the system on which Nature's great scavengers patrol the land. The lower strata we estimated at 800 to 1,000 yards altitude, and these only, it is probable, are on active service, the upper tiers merely standing by, ready to profit by the discoveries of all the working parties that may be in sight beneath them: for at the enormous elevations of the uppermost birds, it is impossible to suppose that even a vulture's eye could detect so small an object as, say, a dead goat on the earth.

There is something peculiarly impressive in the appearance of these colossal birds and in the automaton-like ease of their flight. Ponderous bodies appear suspended in mid-air without visible effort or exertion—the great square wings extended, rigid and motionless, filled

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with air like the wands of a wind-mill, enable them to rest on space, to soar for hours, as it were, by mere volition. How all the vultures manage to find subsistence is a problem, for even in Spain the earth is not strewn with carcases, as on a battle-field.

Towards a certain point of the evergreen plain of palmetto, there is a visible concentration of soaring forms: thither a string of creaking *carros* has conveyed to their last resting-place some dead horses, the victims of Sunday's bull-fight. Thither flock the vultures to hold high carnival: and a striking sight it is to watch perhaps forty or fifty, as they soar and wheel in as many opposing, concentric circles, gradually focussing themselves over the point of attraction. But as they fold their wings and gather in a seething mass around the carrion, all that was majestic and imposing disappears—as they tear open the flanks and, with spluttering growls and gurgles, and flapping of huge wings, dive their great bare necks into the innermost penetralia, the spectacle changes to the repulsive. Yet, as the only existing system of scavengers, they are performing a useful office. Quickly swells the crowd: from every quarter come more and more—the heavens seem alive with hurrying forms sweeping down to the banquet. As the earlier arrivals become satiated, they withdraw a few yards from the revels to enjoy the state of rare repletion, perched on a neighbouring tree or hillock, where they sit with distended crop, fluffed-out feathers and half-closed wings, gorged to the last mouthful, but making room for fresh comers, hungry as they had been before. Thus within a few hours the luckless horses have found a tomb, and when the Griffons have left nothing but bare bones, then another feathered scavenger appears, the Neophron, or in Spanish *Quebranta-huesos*, *i.e.*, the bone-smasher, who sets diligently to work to loosen the ligaments and tear the skeleton asunder. Then, one by one, the bones are carried off and broken by being dropped from a height upon the rocks, when the fragments are devoured: thus the earth is cleansed of corrupting matter.

Vultures, though found all over Spain—whether in

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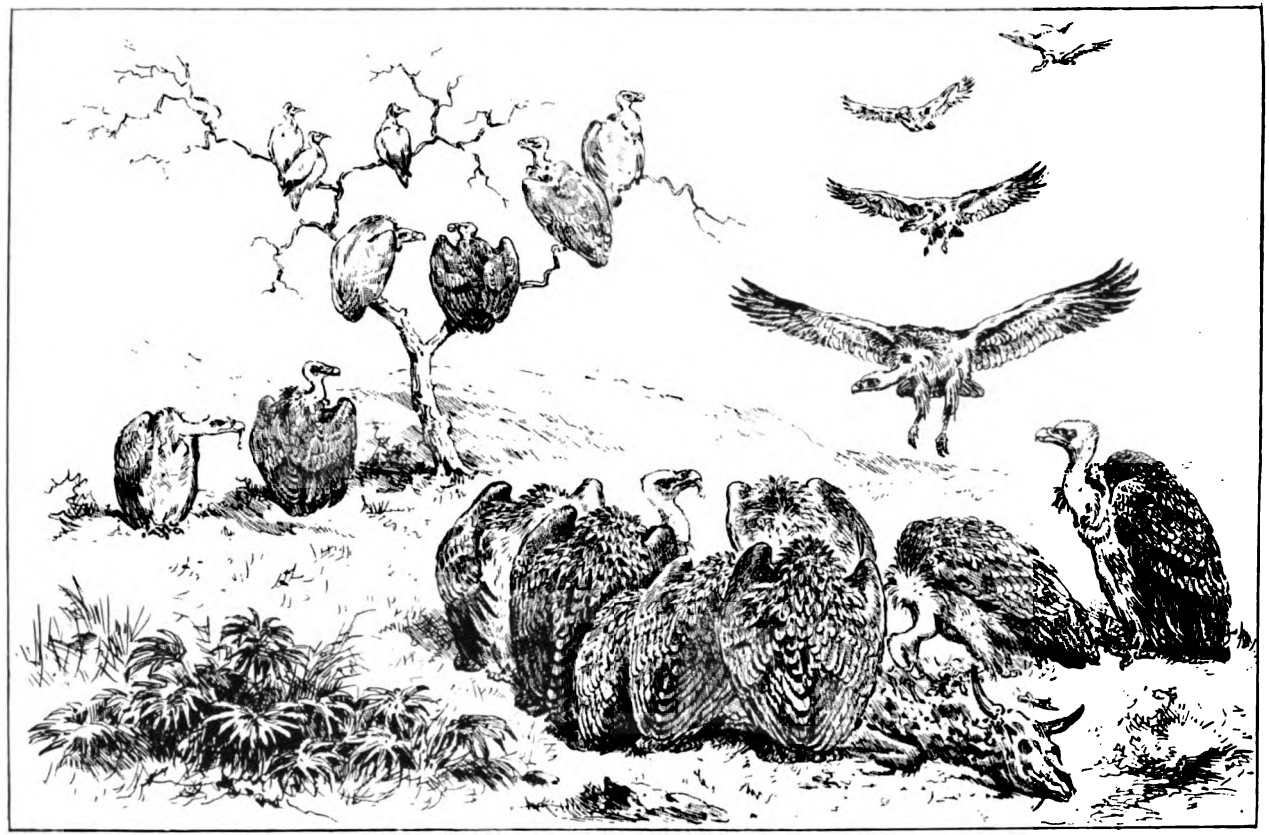

Plate XXIV. A VULTURES' BANQUET. Page 206.

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mountain, marsh, or plain—breed only in the sierras We have observed them in every province from Guipúzcoa to Galicia, and from Asturias to Mediterranean; but nowhere do they so greatly abound as in Andalucia, and especially in that wild mountain-region which forms the southernmost apex of Europe. Here they may fairly be said to swarm, and in our many campaigns in these sierras we have had abundant opportunities of observing them "at home." Here the Griffon Vultures build their broad flat nests on shelves and ledges of the crags, or in caves in the face of sheer walls of rock, many of which exceed 2,000 feet in vertical altitude. The little town of Grazalema is perched on the verge of one of these stupendous *tajos;* from the window of the *posada* one can drop a pebble to invisible depths, midway down which a colony of *Buitres* have had their eyries from time immemorial. The hill-villages of Arcos, El Bosque, Villa Martin, and Bornos, all present similar instances—man seeking the highest apex, the vultures its middle heights, beyond reach of bullet from above or below. Ronda, too, has its *tajo,* but we do not recollect seeing any vultures breeding actually beneath the town.

The Griffons commence repairing their nests as early as January—we have watched them carrying claw-fulls of grass and cut branches from places where charcoal-burners had been lopping the trees, on January 21st; a single large white egg is laid in February, incubation lasts forty days, and a naked, blue-skinned chick is hatched early in April. The young vultures are of extremely slow growth, spending full three months in the nest. By mid-May they are as big as Guinea-fowls: ungainly-looking creatures, all crop and maw, with feathers beginning to show through the thick white down.

Once at that period (May) we were imprisoned in the Sierra de Ubrique, both our animals having fallen lame through loss of shoes, and it was with no small difficulty we eventually extricated ourselves from the heart of those rugged, pathless mountains. During four days and nights we were encamped in the wild pass of the Puerta de

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Palomas, whose crags were tenanted by numerous Griffons, and the strange growls made by them on returning to

GRIFFON VULTURE AND NEST. (Puerta de Palomas.)

their eyries was often the first sound heard on awakening

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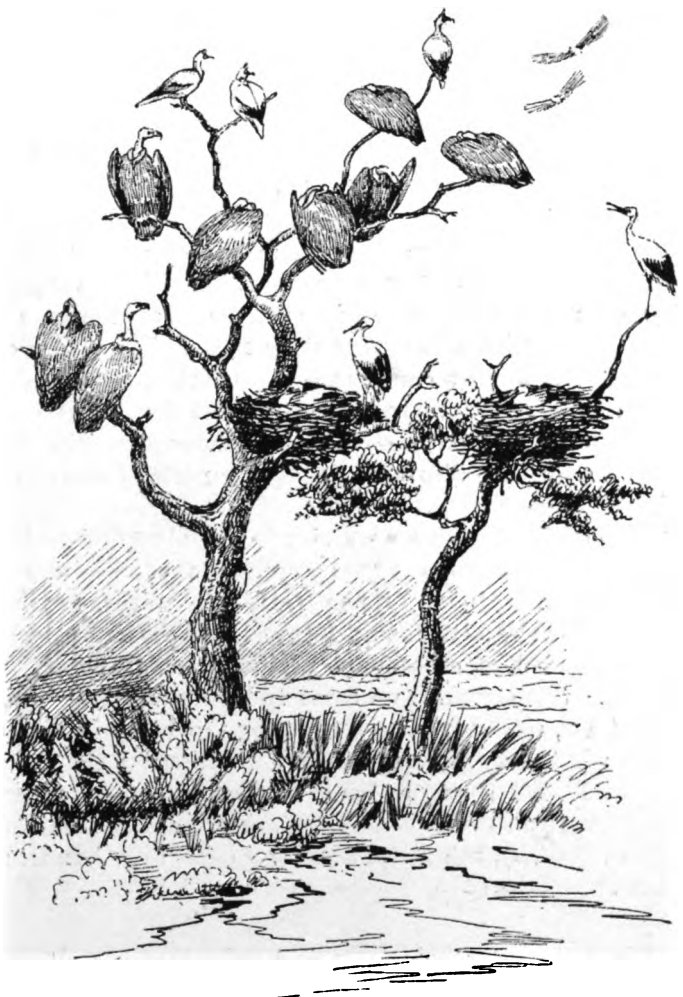
at daybreak, in our roofless bedroom among the boulders, mingled with the awakening notes of the Blue-thrush and Alpine chough. These nests proved to be quite



STRANGE NEIGHBOURS.

the easiest of access we ever saw—the cliffs being rather a chaotic jumble of big rocks and monoliths than

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crags proper; and by clambering over these we reached sixteen nests—many very slight affairs, with bare rock projecting through the scanty structure—of which only two held more than a single poult. The nests of the Griffon—albeit malodorous—are always cleanly. These vultures feed their young exclusively on half-digested food which they disgorge from their own crops—hence there is no carrion or putrefying matter lying about, as is the case at the nests of the Neophron and Lammergeyer. It is the *male* vulture only that, at this season, undertakes lengthened journeys into the plains and low-lands, remaining absent for days together in search of supplies, and returning crop-full of unsavoury store. The vultures seen on the distant plains in spring are all males, the females remaining at or near their nests. The sketch on page 209 represents a curious scene. On the treeless plains of the Isla Mayor many vultures roost (in April) on a solitary clump of dead *encinas*, the lower branches and forks of which are also occupied by the nests of five or six pairs of White Storks.

Three of these eyries were situate on abrupt, detached stacks of rock, so easily accessible that we almost "walked" into them. Some years afterwards, passing through this sierra on March 1st, we found the three stacks occupied as before, each nest containing a single egg.

During this scramble we came suddenly upon a pair of Eagle-Owls, solemnly dreaming away the hours in a deep cavern; but, being in an awkward position on the crag-face, could not spare a hand to secure them. These caverns were also occupied by Choughs and Rock-Martins (*Cotyle rupestris*), the latter sharing a cave with hundreds of bats.*

* The Rock-Martins' nests were fixed under the roof and upper ledges of the caves, not unlike Swallows'. Their eggs are white, slightly flecked with grey. At the same date (May 18th) we also obtained a nest of the Blue Rock-Thrush, with five beautiful greenish-blue eggs. The male, during the breeding-season, has a pretty habit of towering up in the air, singing merrily, then falling back among the rocks like a stone.

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Eventually, after dragging the lame beasts some twenty miles, we got clear of the sierra, but found that our absence had caused much anxiety at Jerez. On the outward ride, it had so chanced, we were present at a sad accident by which two men and their nine mules lost their lives, while attempting to cross the swollen Guadalete at the Barca Florida. Consequently we did not attempt the ford, and only reached the sierra after a long detour: but news of the accident having reached Jerez, and our disappearance being unluckily attributed thereto, the curious result was that the first person we met on the *vega* of Guadalete was honest old Blas, all solemn and dejected, as he endeavoured, by watching the flight of the vultures, to discover our remains!

The beautiful crags of Zurita and the Agredera impending our historic Guadalete, and lying about a dozen miles from Jerez, are a favourite spring ride. In April their lower slopes are resplendent with acres of rhododendrons just bursting into bloom, crimson peonies peep from arid nooks, and the riverside is fringed with laurestinus and myrtle, oleanders, sallows and palmetto, all resonant with the melody of nightingales. To these crags the Neophron, or Egyptian Vulture, yearly resorts, and six or eight nests may be found in a day's ramble, all placed in holes or fissures of the cliff, which, from its rottenness and overhung form, is far from easy to scale. Nor is a Neophron's eyry a very delectable spot when reached; for, handsome as he looks on wing, this vulture is one of the foulest of feeders. The stench at his abode is overpowering; all around lies carrion in every stage of corruption, while swarms of loathsome flies rise and buzz heavily around the intruder. The nest itself is made of rags and wool—no sticks—and the two eggs, often as richly coloured as a Peregrine's, are laid early in April. Though the food of the Neophron is mostly bones, *ordure*, and garbage, yet it will, exceptionally, take living creatures; a male, shot on April 19th, when returning to his nest, carried in his beak the yet writhing remains of a small snake. In a rather low part of this range of crags (its

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highest point, the Agredera peak, is 1,000 feet plumb) a pair of Golden Eagles had their nest, or rather two nests, which they used alternately. The birds did not appear, but we saw the nests, immense masses of sticks conspicuously protruding from crevices in the crag, about forty yards apart. These cliffs are also tenanted by a colony of Genets.

In Andalucia, as in Eastern Europe, the Neophron occasionally nests upon trees. In the lovely, park-like country half a day's ride eastward of Jerez, several pairs breed yearly on high *encinas*, or ilex. Here, in spring, we have seen the old vultures on the nest, and in July have observed big young—dark brown fellows—perched on adjoining branches. For instance:—

April 10*th*, 1891.—Examined to-day three Neophrons' nests on ilex-trees at the Encinar del Visco—broad, solid structures, twice as large as those of the Kites, and warmly lined with cows'-hair, wool, &c. Owing to the backward season, there were no eggs, though in 1883 we took two clutches (each two eggs) on same date.*

One afternoon in the early part of July, 1872—a period when Andalucia was seething with revolution and communistic ideas—a young Golden Eagle was brought in by José Larrios, a man we often employed in sport and country campaigns—the same José whose dare-devil escapade with a bull we have already related (see p. 10). This eaglet he had brought from the Sierra de Alcalá de los Gazules, nearly forty miles distant, where his brothers held a small mountain-farm; and there remained, he said, another fledgeling in the eyrie. The writer, in those early days, had not succeeded in shooting the Royal Eagle, and the ambition to do so was intense, despite the difficulty of

* Observed at this place and date a greater variety of butterflies than ever before in Spain—brilliant Painted Ladies and Fritillaries (? sp.); but most conspicuous were "yellows" of various kinds: *Thäis polyxena* and *Colias edusa*, large pale "sulphurs," some whole-coloured, others with bright orange-tips; in others, again, the orange adjoined the body. There were also many Heaths and Browns, Speckled Wood, Bath Whites, and many (to us) unknown species.

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Plate XXV. "WHERE THE CARCASE IS." Page 213.

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the communists. Two days before we had returned from a fortnight's expedition to the westward, and when riding towards Jerez were stopped by a military cordon who invested the town and demanded our credentials. These being satisfactory, the officer in command informed us that street-fighting was taking place, and detained us till evening, when he kindly furnished us with an escort. We found that two days previously the city had been seized by an armed mob, thousands strong, who by a sudden *coup* had gained possession of the public buildings and barricaded the streets. On the arrival of a troop of cavalry from Seville the mutineers incontinently fled, save a mere handful of the bolder spirits, who stood to their improvised defences to the last, and were finally shot down within the church of San Juan, wherein they had sought refuge. This revolution thus crumbled to nothing, though at one time it threatened to exceed in violence that of three years before (1869), when the barricades were taken at the point of the bayonet, and hundreds of insurgents were shot down in the streets of Jerez.

For the moment danger was past, and the city, within the armed cordon, restored to normal condition, though outside the state of the adjacent country was not certain. Keenness to kill the Royal Eagle of the sierras was paramount, and at midnight José and I set out from La Compañia, the old Jesuit convent which was then our home, and traversing the dark streets and narrow, sandy lanes beyond, we were soon clear of the town, and by daylight had reached the ford of the Alamillo, where we crossed the Guadalete, and were breakfasting at 6.30 in the hill-village of Paterna—five leagues. Early in the afternoon we completed the twelve leagues and reached the little *cortijo* of Jautor, the abode of José's two brothers, who agreed to take us to the eagle's nest that evening. Jautor is surrounded by towering sierras, and we proceeded on foot up a rough goat-track, choked with strong brushwood, and leading up the steep southern acclivity. After climbing and walking about two hours, we reached the nest, a huge pile of sticks surmounting an oak-tree which hung over a deep *garganta*

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or mountain-ravine. What was my vexation to find, after eighteen hours' labour, that it was empty! On one side lay part of the leg of a kid, and about half a hare, both quite fresh, but the eaglet was gone; and though we waited till dusk on the chance of the old bird returning, we saw nothing, and had to retrace our weary steps, sticking and stumbling in the dark, to the shepherds' hut, dead-beat and disappointed.

The *choza* was a mere hut built of long *cañas* or reeds, in the form of an extinguisher, the interior being circular, some 15ft. in diameter, occupied by many goats, poultry, and cats—not to mention minor inhabitants, and with a wood fire smouldering in the centre. I had hardly coiled myself in my rug and laid down to sleep on the low mud settee which ran round the back of the den, when a furious outburst of barking took place among the numerous dogs which lay sleeping round the fire. The goatherd opened the door, and there entered an old man, bronze-visaged and wiry, leading behind him a donkey. He was a smuggler, and his packs, crammed with contraband of infinite variety, were soon deposited on the floor, and the donkey hobbled and turned out to find bed and breakfast where it might. Then the *cerrones* were unpacked, and their multifarious contents displayed on the mud floor—pins, needles and scissors, buttons, and bobbins of thread, tobacco, tape, and sundry kinds of coloured cloth and bright ribbons. The latter at once "fetched" the feminine portion of the community—alas! for the chances of sleep for the weary—female nature is everywhere the same, even in the *choza* of a goatherd buried amidst these lonely sierras, and bargaining and chatter continued well-nigh throughout the livelong night.

The simple peasants, though unable to comprehend my object, were sincerely distressed at our failure; and next morning, while we were busy cooking our breakfast under the shade of a spreading laurestinus, came to say there was another eagle's nest on the opposite side of the valley. They had kindly sent a lad at daybreak to make inquiries at a neighbouring farm, four miles distant.

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Thither accordingly we set out, riding for several miles till the ascent became so abrupt, and intercepted with brushwood, that it was necessary to picket the horses, leaving them in charge of a lad, and to proceed on foot. We crossed the ridge of the sierra and entered an upland valley beyond, where, in a tall poplar, standing slightly apart, was a rather small nest containing a single eaglet. I must have fallen asleep at my post, for presently José, who had left me in ambush, aroused me to say that the eagle had returned, fed her young, and departed! While we were talking the female flew overhead, and instantly catching sight of us, with a scream dropped a rabbit she was carrying, and soared heavenwards. My shot dropped her stone-dead, and she fell within a few yards of her victim—a female of the Serpent-Eagle, a species well known on the wooded plains, but which we had hardly expected to find in the mountains. We have related this incident because there followed one of the most singular occurrences that have happened within our ornithological experiences. On being skinned, this eagle was found to contain the almost entire remains of a young eagle, which, from its feathered tarsi and general appearance, was certainly a nestling Golden Eagle—the counterpart, perhaps the brother, of the one José had already brought alive to Jerez! We can only state the bare fact, as above, and surmise that the youngster was yesterday the occupant of the eyrie we had travelled so far to despoil, and that the actual and would-be destroyers had thus accidentally come in collision.

About a league further the valley terminated in a fine amphitheatre of crags, showing remarkably bold and abrupt escarpments. The highest part was occupied by a colony of Griffons, and while resting for an hour or so in a niche of this mountain rampart, I shot four of the great birds. Collectively they measured across the expanded wings some thirty-eight feet, and though we had no means of weighing them, estimated them at about forty pounds apiece. One of the vultures shot here, a fine bird with bushy white frill, the peasants asserted to be between

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300 and 400 years old, though how they could tell is a mystery. This bird was killed with ball on the wing. The smell of Griffon Vultures when shot is strong and most offensive: their claws and long feathers are always much abraded by attrition on the rocks, and their whole plumage has a worn and faded appearance, in harmony with the decay and death in which they rejoice.

The young vultures were at last (July 8th) on the wing, having spent some three months in the nests:* they are now of a clear, bright cinnamon colour, much handsomer than the adults, each feather being shaded; and one shot to-day measured between eight and nine feet in expanse of wing.

Our lofty perch commanded a grand mountain landscape —sierras extending range beyond range in swelling stony masses or jagged sky-lines. Alpine Swifts dashed overhead; Blackchats and Blue Rock-Thrushes flitted among the crags, and, with the great vultures soaring above and below, afforded some interesting scenes. The mid-day heat was intense, and we had a rough tramp down to the horses through broken ground and thick young wood, where we disturbed a Roe and saw many traces of others. It was after dark when we reached a miserable wayside *venta*, where, alongside half a dozen snoring peasants and tormented by a million fleas, we passed the night on the ground.

Returning homewards next morning, while we were passing through the outlying spurs or foothills of the sierra, a pair of large dark eagles were observed hunting a scrub-covered ridge. The larger of the two presently swept down upon an unlucky rabbit and forthwith commenced to devour it, the male perching on a stump hard by. They were favourably situate for a stalk, and by riding round in a wide circuit I gained the reverse of the ridge. On creeping forward to my marks, however, I could at first see nothing—only a few palmetto bushes some

* One nest still contained an unfledged youngster. On my appearance at his abode the unsightly little brute at once disgorged a mass of carrion that necessitated an immediate retreat.

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distance down the slope. Having crawled to these, I perceived the eagle busily tearing up her prey in a slight hollow of the ground. She was only forty yards away, yet the sitting shot (broadside on) produced no effect. A "green wire-

BONELLI'S EAGLE. (Adult Female, shot July 10th, 1872.)

cartridge, No. 1" from the left, broke a wing as she rose, and, after some little trouble, she was secured. She proved to be a Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila bonellii*), a perfect adult specimen, dark brown above, with white breast boldly

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streaked and splashed with black: the bushy "stockings" and warm reddish-brown *tarsi* contrasting with the long white "apron" which overlapped them. (*See photo.*)

Thus occurred—over twenty years ago—our first introduction to Bonelli's Eagle: since then we have met with them frequently in the southern sierras, in the Castiles, and once in the Biscayan Provinces. It is, in fact, the commonest mountain-breeding eagle in Spain, and is easily recognizable by its short, dappled wings, and by the peculiar feature that the *middle* of the back is white—thus, if seen from above, the bird appears to have a large white spot between the wings.

In former days, the hill-peasants assert that it bred in quite low rocks, and several such abandoned eyries have been pointed out to us: but we have only seen its nest in the most stupendous rock-walls—places that make one's flesh creep to survey. The two eggs, usually white, but occasionally splashed or spotted, are laid in the early days of February—we have watched these eagles repairing their nest at Christmas. The young in first plumage, like those of the Imperial Eagle, are of a chestnut-tawny hue. The claws of Bonelli's Eagle are remarkably long and powerful, and its chief prey consists of hares, rabbits, and other game. Hares it appears unable to carry up *whole* to its eyry on the heights, tearing them into halves, and birds found in its nest are usually headless.

The Golden Eagle also breeds in all the mountain-regions of Spain, both in high rocks and occasionally (as above mentioned) on trees. Its nest is often an enormous structure—quite a cartload of sticks.

The Golden and Bonelli's Eagles are strictly denizens of the mountains: but in autumn both species descend to the plains and marismas in search of prey. On more than one occasion, while shooting on the lowlands in winter, we have secured a Golden Eagle as he flew to roost in the pine-woods: and on Nov. 29th, some years ago, while flight-shooting, a Bonelli's Eagle was so intent on the capture of a winged Ruddy Sheldrake (*Tadorna rutila*) which had fallen to a neighbouring gun, as almost to fly

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into the writer's *puesto*. This eagle was in the act of lifting the heavy duck off the water when a charge of big shot cut him down.

Our old *cazador*, Felipe, who has since become keeper on a rabbit and partridge preserve fully twenty miles from the nearest point of the sierra, told us that so many eagles come down to prey on his rabbits during the months of November and December that during the preceding season he had killed over thirty. Felipe added that they were mostly Golden and Bonelli's Eagles (*Aguila perdicera* he called the latter), with a few Serpent-Eagles earlier in the autumn. At the time of our visit (January) most of the eagles had retired to the sierras to breed: but a few days afterwards Felipe rode in with a cargo which sorely puzzled the officials of the *consumos* (octroi), for under either arm he bore an eagle, and in a sack on his back were two immense wild-cats! The eagles were *A. chrysäetus*, and an immature, tawny-breasted Bonelli.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

ON SPANISH AGRICULTURE.

I.—Cereals, Green Crops, etc.

Around Spanish agriculture, as around other Iberian industries, hangs a cloud of almost Oriental apathy. A land which might be one of the granaries of Europe is so neglected that, even with an import duty on corn, it is barely self-supporting—indeed, during 1889, Spain had to pay upwards of one million sterling for imported wheat.

Since the fall of Moorish dominion, the population of Andalucia has fallen to less than half; large areas which in Moorish days were smiling corn-lands, to-day lie barren and unproductive, choked with brushwood—the great southern *despoblados*, or deserts.

Nearly one-half the entire land of Spain (to be exact, 45·8 per cent.) is without cultivation of any kind; and of the rest, the productive powers are but half utilized. The yield of the best land in a favourable season rarely reaches forty bushels per acre, and the average, taking one year with another, may be placed at twenty; while in Northumberland thirty bushels is an average, and fifty a not infrequent yield.

The three chief agricultural products of Spain are corn, oil, and wine—of the latter, we treat more particularly in another chapter. The corn-farms—each usually including a certain proportion of olive-wood—extend from four or five hundred acres up to large holdings of as many

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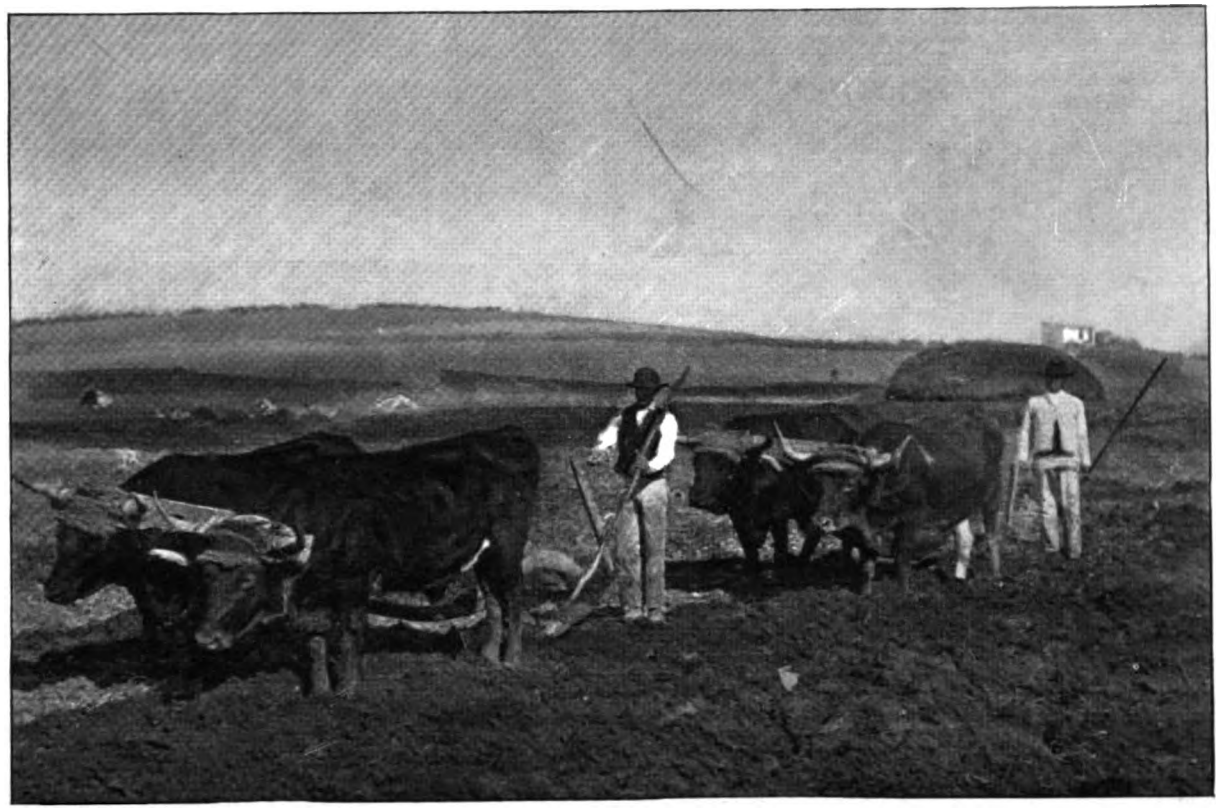

Plate XXVI. PLOUGHING WITH OXEN. Page 221.

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thousand; and, as a rule, are cultivated by their non-resident owners, through a steward.*

Even in the case of rented land, the farmer seldom himself lives on his holding, but entrusts the management to an agent, while he resides in his town house. Neither landowner nor farmer live in the country.

This deep-rooted antipathy to a country-life is one of the many causes of the decrepitude of Spanish agriculture, among which may be specified the following:—

1.—The custom of absenteeism.

2.—The antiquated system of tillage.

3.—The absence of woods and plantations, the beneficial effects of which on climate and atmosphere are specially necessary in this hot, dry country. The comparatively small forest-areas are, in many parts, as previously stated, being rapidly reduced by the hatchet of the charcoal-burner.

4.—The neglect of irrigation. In wet winters, the low-lying lands are flooded, and the whole country is water-logged; in summer the reverse is the case—moisture is non-existent, every green thing is burnt up, yet no attempt is made to direct and conserve the rain-supplies, albeit the remains of the aqueducts and irrigation-works of Roman and Moor are ever present to suggest the silent lesson of former foresight and prosperity.

Of a total area of some forty-four and a half million acres under cultivation, *less than two* millions are irrigated (*regadio*), leaving forty-two and a half million acres of "dry lands" (*secano*).

The following table forms an interesting commentary—to those who can endure statistics—on the state of agriculture in Spain. It shows the exact proportion of irrigated and non-irrigated land under each crop, &c. The figures

* Of the 3,529,600 separate rural properties which exist on the Spanish land-register, 2,729,600 are administered and cultivated for the account of their proprietors; and 800,000 are let at a rental, either in cash or "kind."

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represent "*fanegas*," which are, roughly, equivalent to acres.

Crop or Condition.	Irrigated. (*Regadio.*)	Dry Lands. (*Secano.*)
Garden produce, vegetables, &c.	245,798	—
Fruit-trees	58,095	384,642
Corn and seeds	1,139,964	18,988,410
Vines	66,359	2,121,070
Olive-woods	76,588	1,181,386
Meadow	291,240	842,319
Salt-pans	29,174	—
Pasturage...	—	3,963,538
Groves and marshy dells (*alamedas y sotos*) ...	—	130,570
Brushwood (*monte, alto y bajo*)	—	7,279,346
Winter grazings (*eriales con pastos*)	—	5,198,331
Threshing-grounds, &c. (*eras y canteras*) ...	—	48,277
Non-productive	—	2,452,289
Total	1,907,168	42,580,148

Oriental customs survive in the hiring of labour, both for field and vineyard. Men are not employed permanently —only "taken on" as occasion requires. A hiring-place is the feature of Spanish rural towns—the Plaza, or public square, usually serving the purpose. Here, at all hours, but notably at early morn and sunset, stand groups of swarthy labourers, waiting for hire, and contentedly smoking their cigarettes till some *capataz*, or foreman, comes to terms with them.

Corn and wine are cultivated by distinct classes of labourers—those for the vineyard, superior workmen, gaining thrice the pay of the others. In the vineyards the men receive the equivalent of three francs a day, with oil and vinegar—important items in a hot country—while the corn-farmer only pays one franc, with bread and oil.

The only permanent hands at a vineyard are the capataz and his assistant, the duties of the latter being to bring bread from the town on his pannier-mule, and water from the best or nearest well in those cool earthen pitchers called *cántaros*. Water is almost as important as food. Among the poor it is the national drink—the quality produced by each well is known and often dis-

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cussed. Andalucians are critical judges of water, classing it as *mala*, bad, unwholesome; *gorda*, turbid or flavoured; *regulár*, pretty good, and *agua rica*, the best of bright sparkling water. In praising his native hamlet, the first point with a Spanish peasant will be "*the water there is good.*" Water, however, be it *gorda* or *rica*, they must have; and wherever on glowing plain or calcined hill-side one sees a gang of labourers gently scratching the earth with tiny hoe, there also are sure to be lying those porous, amphora-shaped *cántaros* full of water, ice-cold, albeit a tropical sun has for hours impinged vertically on their porous sides. Oh, how delicious a draught can be enjoyed from those rude, old-world vessels surely none but thirst-stricken labourer under Spanish summer sun—be he peasant or bustard-shooter—can ever fully realize!

At the cortijo, or corn-farm, are four or five permanent employés—the steward, the bread-maker, and the tenders of the working oxen. All the rest of the labourers—men or women—are hired temporarily as required. Herdsmen and shepherds we do not include, as these do not live at the farm, but in some reed-built *choza*, or other rough shelter hard by their flocks. Hence it will be seen that the class of labour employed on arable land is of the lowest—there is none of the inducement to steady industry begotten of permanent place. At the vineyards, in addition to the higher rate of wage, the food supplied is also much superior. This industry, in short, absorbs the pick of the labour-market. No women are employed in the vineyards, nor allowed to touch a vine, though on the farms many are engaged for such work as hoeing and weeding.

To become the capataz of a vineyard is the highest ambition of the labourer. To go into the market-place and hire, instead of standing there to be hired, are obviously very different things. It implies, besides, permanent wages at increased rate, without manual work to do, for the capataz only orders.

He hires the labourers required, often with an eye to his own advantage. The master never sees the men engaged: there is no check on the honesty of the agent, but con-

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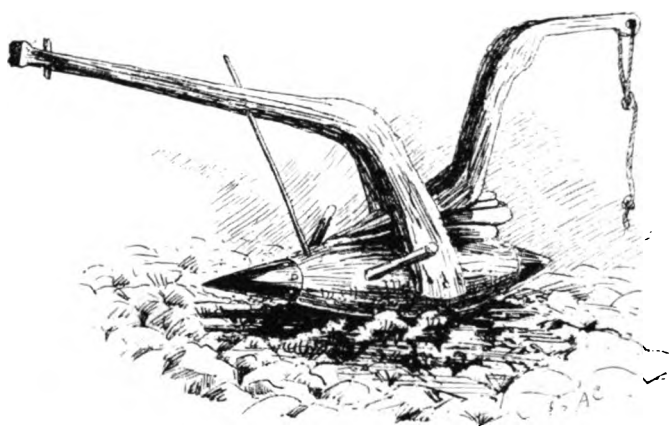
siderable variation in the quality of the hired. The old, the halt and lame, if friends of the capataz, receive the same pay as the young and strong. Although all may go forth into the vineyard at the seventh hour, there is yet ground for doubting the substantial justice of the nineteenth-century capataz as there was in olden days of Bible history.

These and other minor abuses will not be remedied till landowner and farmer live on their properties—a thing unknown in Spain. The farmer, or *labrador*—as with grotesque incongruity he styles himself—lives in his cool and luxurious mansion in the town, receiving visits every few



WOODEN PLOUGHSHARE.

days from his steward; but months go by, even years, between his rare visits to the farm. The land is, as a rule, his own, and being a man of means, so long as things go on fairly, and his sacks of corn or casks of wine arrive in town in due season, and without excessive pillage, he is content.

Most of the farms being held by capitalists, the farmer can withstand the loss of a few bad years: and when a good one comes—they calculate one fat year to four lean—all losses are recouped and a large balance to the good rewards his patience.

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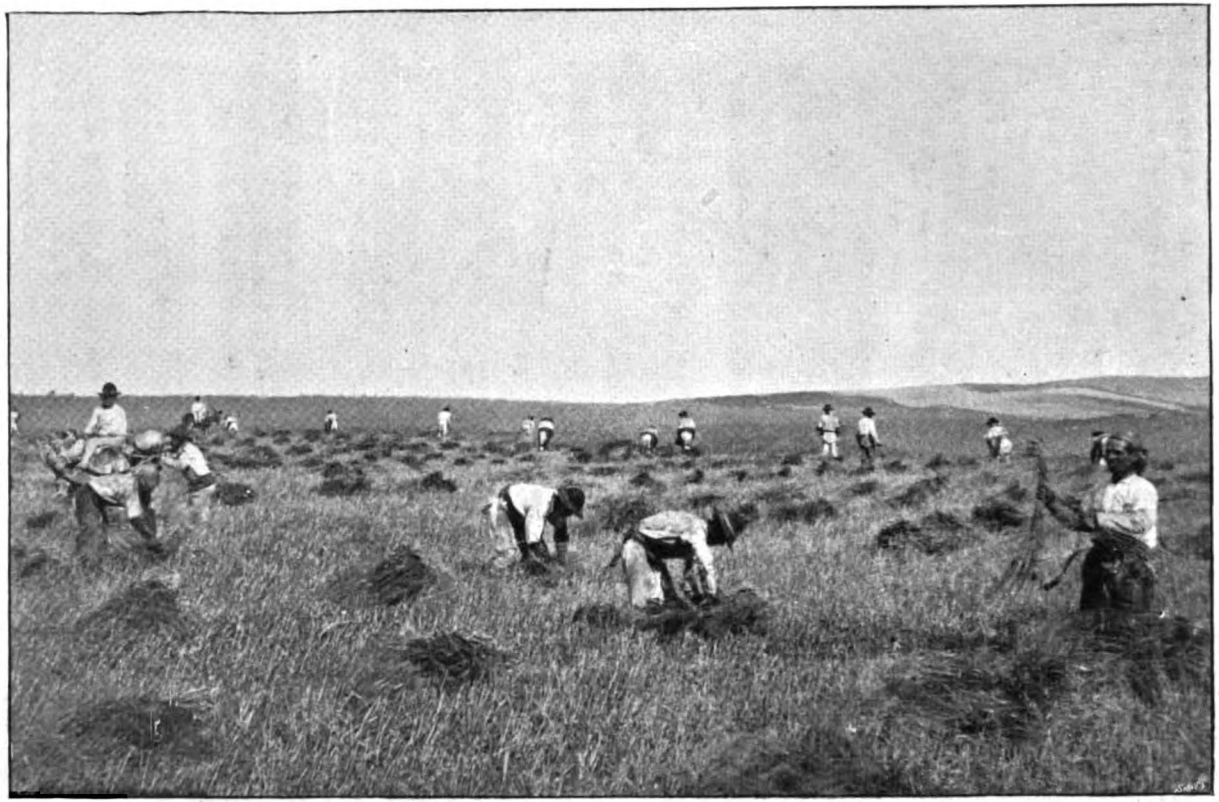

Plate XXVII. THE HARVEST-FIELD. Page 225.

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Ploughing, or what passes muster as such—a tickling of the surface by tiny wooden ploughshare identical with those of Roman days, drawn by yokes of tardy-plodding oxen—takes place in autumn. Wheat is sown in December, the seed scattered broadcast, and one-third of the land laid fallow each year. The fallows (*manchones*) in spring produce wildernesses of weeds, as tall and rank as the corn itself, and gorgeous with wild-flowers—Elysian fields for the bustards, which revel amidst the ripening seeds and legions of locusts and grasshoppers. Here whole acres glow with crimson trefoil, contrasting with the blue borage and millions of convolvuli: there are lilies and balsams, asphodel, iris, and narcissi of every hue—but it is idle to attempt to describe the unspeakable floral beauties of the Spanish *manchon*.

The fallows are not, however, left to waste their substance entirely on weeds and wild-flowers, for they form the best spring-grazing grounds for cattle, and thus, too, receive a certain allowance of manure.

One's patience is exercised to watch the tardy oxen creeping along those league-long furrows! Even in our English corn-lands, in the fifty-acre fields of Norfolk or Northumberland, there appears to our non-technical eyes a grievous disproportion between the work to be done and the means employed, albeit a dozen stout draughts may be at work in a single field. Here, where the "field" stretches away unbroken by fence or hedge to the horizon, a day's journey in either direction for those plodding oxen, the task truly appears more hopeless than the labours of Sisyphus. Not even on the prairies of Western America can they boast a longer furrow than can be traced on these plains of tawny, treeless Spain. Well may the ploughman seek, by chanting old-time ditties, to avoid utter vacuity of mind.

In June and July the harvest is gathered in—no musical rattle of reaper, for the sickle still holds its place: and over the breadth of fallen swathe soar hawks of every sort and size, preying on the locusts and other large insects and reptiles now deprived of their accustomed covert.

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Then follows the threshing of the corn, an operation which is carried on with the primitive simplicity of the patriarchs of old—perhaps on precisely the same lines. The sheaves are brought from the stubble on creaking bullock-carts, and thrown on the *era*, or threshing-ground, a hardened level space adjoining the farm. Here it is threshed—or rather trodden out under foot by the *yeguas*—brood-mares, a team of which are kept briskly trotting over the circle of outstrewn sheaves, driven on by a man who stands in the centre. With a long whip and the skill of a circus manager, he drives the mares in circles, round and round—this is the only duty asked of the *yeguas* all the year, except that of maternity. Amidst clouds of dust and heat the sweating animals are urged on till the corn and brittle straw is trodden into finest chaff. Then the mares are rested, the grain and chaff pushed aside to make room for fresh sheaves, and the operation is repeated till all the produce has been trodden out.

The next process is to throw the broken corn high in air with broad wooden shovels. The wind serves to separate the grain from the chaff, the former falling in heaps on the earth, while the lighter material drifts away to leeward. The grain is gathered into sacks, loaded upon donkeys, and away goes the team to the owner's granary in the town: as many as three score, and more, of patient *borricos* may often at this season be seen plodding along the dusty byeway. Similarly one sees, at the same season, the casks of newly-pressed wine being jolted along on bullock-carts towards the town, along rough roads or tracks that will not be required again till the same traffic occurs after the next year's vintage.

The broken straw and chaff is stored in large stacks, to form the staple food for horses and cattle during the winter: and is indeed of good quality, affording as much nutriment as the best hay, of which none is grown in this southern land.*

* Though no hay is made expressly, yet the sun-baked herbage, called *pastos*, of the fallows and winter grazings is practically equivalent to hay found ready-made

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Plate XXVIII. THRESHING THE CORN WITH YEGUAS (MARES). Page 226.

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The corn goes to the owner's granary, the wine to his bodega, and all is soon safely housed within the city walls. Nothing, beyond actual necessaries, is left in the country.

The antipathy evinced by Spaniards towards the country is a curious feature of this southern life. No Spaniard, rich or poor, will remain in the country for a single night, even in the green and glorious spring-time when the Andalucian *vegas* revel in richest charm to eye and ear. The labourers whose work takes them into the *campo* do their best to get back by night: even the poorest prefer a walk of several miles, morning and evening, rather than remain overnight amidst rustic scenes. Centuries of former insecurity may explain this: but now no present cause can be assigned beyond the force of habit, and perhaps the fear of being overtaken by sudden illness or death beyond the reach of priest—in which case the last rites of religion might not be available.

Whatever be the cause, the country gentleman, the country parson and doctor, Hodge and rural population generally, are unknown in Spain. The landowner hies him townwards at night to his gossip, his *paséo* and his favourite game of *tresillo* at the casino—the workman to his village, his wife and bairns in the humble tenement he proudly calls his *casa*. Spain is a land of customs and accepted traditions—be they good or bad. For centuries no one has sought to introduce a novelty—say a taste for rural life, though the conditions for its enjoyment exist here as favourably, at least, as elsewhere. So far as we can judge, the vesper-bell will continue for all time to gather in the natives to the cities as rookeries unite their flocks when every sun goes down.

This, of course, does not apply to farmsteads remote from town or village, where labourers and herdsmen perforce live as in a rural fortress. It is not surprising that, with the gregarious instincts of the Spanish people, the lot of such men should be despised; and that there should arise in these unhappy groups, isolated for weeks from kith and kin, and with the barest means of subsistence, that spirit of discontent which resulted in 1883 in the

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mano negra, and this year in that anarchical furor which, on both occasions, was expiated on the scaffold.

Agriculture in Spain is thus deprived of that *gracia* which in other lands distinguishes it from other commercial pursuits. It is devoid of that loving, homely interest that in England attaches to it, making the cultivation of the soil—at least when conducted (willingly) by the landowner—something of a recreation or "labour of love." Here, nothing beyond elementary and imperative operations are carried on—those which a rule-of-thumb experience has shown to give fairly good results with a minimum of trouble. Experiments are things unknown. There is a settled conviction among the agricultural class that improvement is impossible, that their patriarchal system represents perfection. Reward is looked for rather in a twenty or thirty-fold return once in every four or five years by luck of favouring climatic conditions, than sought to be assured by skill and the adoption of modern modes of tillage.

Corn-growing nevertheless does pay in Spain, owing to the import-duty on foreign grain, which ensures a profit to the home-producer. But fortunes realized on the *cortijo* are always ascribed rather to a run of good luck than to any other specific cause.

He would be a bold man who departed from the traditional systems in vogue since time began, in this land where "whatever is is best." And a strange fatality does await experimental changes. The very soil seems to repel innovation. A firm of practical English agriculturists failed signally some thirty years ago, and one still hears it satirically told how the deep-searching iron ploughshares from Inglaterra left offended fields which for years afterwards refused to yield a crop.

The minor accessories of farming, such as the dairy, poultry and the stock-yard, which, we are told, stand between many an English farmer and ruin, are here ignored. For this, however, there is some excuse in the vexatious and mistaken system of the octroi (*consumos*), under which farm-produce and consumables of

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Plate XXIX. WINNOWING. Page 228.

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every kind are taxed on entering the town. The rural farmer, it is true, escapes the town taxes, but as a counterpoise, to tax his produce on its way to market, is clearly saddling the wrong horse.* The incidence of such a burden clearly falls upon the already over-taxed consumer in the towns, increasing the cost of the necessaries of life. The whole system is, moreover, arbitrary and irritating. How would one like at home to be stopped every time he came in from a day's shooting, in order that a "duty" may be assessed on his bag of partridge, rabbits, or quail? Or, worse still, on a few bottles of wine which may remain unconsumed at luncheon, but which the official of the octroi knows perfectly well were taken out into the *campo* that same morning?

The principal crops raised (Andalucia) are wheat, barley, beans, and chick-pea (*garbanzo*), together with rye, alfalfa, vetches, and canary-seed. Very few oats are sown, barley forming the chief grain-food for horses.† No roots are cultivated, no manure applied, nor any scientific rotation of crops attempted.

Neither maize nor rice are cultivated in the south, though both form important items in other parts of the Peninsula. Rice, especially, is grown on the Mediterranean coast (Valencia, &c.), and in Portugal. Possibly the Andalucian marismas *might* form "paddy-fields" that would make San Lucar a rival of Rangoon, as similarly Cadiz *might* compete with Odessa. But may these "improve-

* Taxation falls heavily enough on the farmer direct. Landowners are asked by the State for about one-fourth of the rental. The tax on tenant-farmers is equally heavy, estimated by a cumbrous assessment, based on the number of draught-oxen employed, or the head of grazing stock. A large proportion of the taxation leviable is, however, evaded.

† The following table shows the production of *cereals* (in Spain) in a normal year:—

Wheat	...	...	...	32,776,055	hectolitres.
Barley	...	...	...	17,410,164	,,
Rye ...	...	...	...	7,892,778	,,
Maize	...	...	...	7,788,183	,,
Oats ...	...	...	...	2,633,672	,,

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ments" await another age! May some few outlandish nooks and corners of Europe be left as God made them, where primæval conditions may yet survive, and wild nature reign in uncontaminated glory—at least during our time.

Much could easily be done to bring Spanish farming nearer to European standards. Improvements will come, one day or another: already the dawn of a more active industrial life is beginning to glimmer. But as yet the flutter extends only to manufactures, not to agriculture. Capitalists are beginning to furnish their factories with the appliances of modern machinery, and Spanish workmen are found capable of adapting themselves, by their intelligence and attention, to the new conditions, and to bear a fair comparison with the workmen of other countries.

The wave of progress is at present confined to the foundry, the mine, and the workshop, but will some day, perhaps, extend to the *campo*—substitute the steam-plough and reaper for the sluggish ox-team and sickle, the steam-thrasher for the trotting brood-mares, and metamorphose into an active industry the present drowsy, old-world routine of Spanish agriculture.

Progress in Spain moves with halting step, and it were folly to cherish sanguine expectations. Such a change can only come with altered conditions in the people. Why, for example, try to improve dairy arrangements when there is no demand for fresh butter? Why trouble with the cattle when the fighting bull is the prize animal of the pasture? What encouragement is there to improve the grazing of stock when an enthusiast who had stall-fed his beasts is told by the butcher, "if you wish me to sell any more of your animals, you must send them *without fat*"? Hitherto this gentleman's efforts to reform the national taste have resulted in utter collapse. Fattened joints are, in Spain, in advance of the age, amongst a people wedded to the flesh-pots of the *puchero*, wherein the beef is required to be, above all things, lean. The fat of the pig only is appreciated in Spanish cuisine.

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CHAPTER XIX.

ON SPANISH AGRICULTURE—(CONTINUED).

THE OLIVE.

INTERSPERSED amidst the monotony of corn-land and vineyard is seen the peculiar foliage of the olive. Its regular rows of sober green cover many of the higher lands and hillsides, and its produce, next to corn and wine, occupies the third place of importance. Outside the ancient *huertas*, where since Moorish days the orange, lemon, and citron have been carefully tended and watered, the olive is the only cultivated tree; and well does it repay the minimum of care which it requires. The olive enters largely into the economy of every-day existence, forming an important element both in the food and light of the Spanish people. Olive-oil is the universal illuminant—in a little saucer with rudely-fixed cotton wick (the *mariposa*), it lights the herdsman's choza, the cottage, and cortijo: this oil is also a leading article of consumption with all classes. To the poor it is an absolute necessary, taking the place occupied by meat among northern nations, giving flavour and zest to the hard bread and to the tough dry stock-fish imported from Newfoundland or Norwegian fjord—besides being an essential ingredient in the universal gazpacho. The fruit itself, in various forms, gives a national flavour to nearly every dish. Every one eats olives, from the wayfarer on the dusty highroad, whose hunch of dry bread is sweetened by a handful of the piquant fruit, to the Madrilenian epicure who at Lhardy's restaurant demands the "Reinas" from Seville. These olives are of large size, —almost like walnuts—and are only rivalled in flavour by

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the "manzanillas," a smaller variety more resembling the French olive, but, to our thinking, of superior taste.

These two kinds are carefully gathered in late autumn, and are in universal demand throughout the Peninsula. Beyond its boundaries they are little known or appreciated, though some few have already found consumers in the north of Europe.

Although the olive-trees are of the hardiest nature—otherwise they could not survive, without irrigation, the

"WAITING FOR DEATH."

intense heats of summer—yet the crop is a precarious one. After the fruit has been gathered in December, or rather beaten off the trees, for that is the method adopted, the olives destined for the oil-mill are subjected to severe pressure by rudely-constructed wooden screws, often supplemented by stone-weights—again the simplest appliances of modern machinery are often neglected—and the oil extracted is drawn off and separated into different qualities. None, however, is of that grade—or rather its manufacture

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and elaboration are too rough and careless, to enable the Spanish produce to compete with the refined neutral oils of Italy and France. With a little more care in its manufacture, and more energy in its introduction to foreign markets, the rich oils of Spain might doubtless be made a source of much additional national wealth.

Its substantial qualities, and in particular its power of long sustaining light, are appreciated in Russia, where it is superseding the oils of other countries for its reliable illumination of the *icons*, or sacred lamps. The religious tenets of the Muscovites require that these small lamps, suspended before their images, should burn brightly, without trimming, through the longest winter nights of eighteen or twenty hours. The little glass tumblers of the *icons* are filled to the brim with Spanish oil: a perforated metal bar placed across, holds the lightly-twisted cotton wick, and once lighted the little lamp burns brightly, without smoke or attention, through the longest nights of the northern winter.

At present the preparation and export of Spanish oil is almost monopolized by the port of Malaga.

Horse-Breeding and Live Stock.

Andalucia is the breeding-ground of the best horses of the Peninsula: many of the landowners are possessed of well-known "brands," as they are called, and the farmers are almost universally interested in horses to some extent. Great strides have been made of recent years in the improvement of the breeds through the importation of thorough-bred English sires, &c. This is, indeed, the one branch of rural industry in which a decided advance has been made. Since the introduction of racing into the country by Englishmen, about 1867—Jerez de la Frontera being the cradle of this, as of most other sports—the superiority of the present breed has been thoroughly established. Horses of a larger and better stamp than formerly are now seen bearing the branded device of the various pro-

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vincial herds, it being still the custom to brand each foal with the particular sign of the stud to which it belongs.

For temper and enduring powers the old Spanish hack could never be improved upon; but in shape and make the race had sadly degenerated since the Spanish Gennet was the favourite and fashionable steed of the wealthy both in France and England. The heavy Flemish stallions introduced by Carlos Quinto—of which Velasquez' pictures give us the type—account for this falling-off from the earlier form of that high-bred Arab race which long ago supplied the wants of a nation of horsemen—the *Caballeros*, whose interests in life were coloured and directed by a devotion to knight-errantry unparalleled in other lands, and which still leaves its impress on the thought and habit of the *Hidalgos* of to-day.

Now, however, the Andalucian horse bids fair to regain his ancient prestige; some of the more ambitious *haras* boast their strings of pedigree-stock, and the stud-book of Spain is an established institution, its register having been zealously kept till this year, by the sportsman-grandee, the late Duke of Fernan Nuñez.

In contrast to these favoured breeds, and at the other extremity of the scale, we have the almost wild horses of the marismas, which shift for themselves throughout the year on the open wastes, and fly, like the deer, from the unaccustomed sight of man. The heats of summer, the cold and wet of winter, are faced in turn by this hardy race, which, in return for their freedom, provide their owners with a yearly contingent of sturdy offspring. These youngsters are only separated from the wild herds, "rounded up," and captured with great difficulty—after long and fast chases on the open plains. Perfect little demons of vice and fury they are, too, when caught, shaggy and unkempt little beasts, coated with dried mud, biting at each other, quarrelling and screaming with savage rage—a *corral* full of them newly-caught is indeed a singular sight. On many of the old mares of the marisma the hand of man has never placed a halter.

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Of the fine description of Spanish merino sheep, so celebrated till the beginning of the eighteenth century, and so rigorously guarded and protected by Spanish Governments, there remains to-day hardly a trace. France, Sweden, and Saxony found means about that period to obtain specimens of the Spanish breed, and with them departed the glory of the privileged race. There remain now in Spain but degenerate representatives. Years of apathy have left to her little but the coarsest breed of sheep both as to flesh and fleece. The race from which nearly all the best European varieties have originated is now, perhaps, the lowest on the list.

Mutton is comparatively scarce in the southern *mercados*, where for one sheep may be seen a dozen kids exposed for sale. The latter—strange parti-coloured little beasts—together with the ubiquitous pig and tough, stringy beef, provide most of the meat consumed in Spain, whose scant quantity and poor quality is eked out by vast supplies of small birds—Larks, Buntings, Quails, and the like—which are caught by means of a dark-lantern at night, as we have elsewhere described; whole festoons of small birds, with Partridge, wildfowl, and Little Bustards, adorn the market-stalls in the Spanish cities, flanked by Roe and Red Deer from the forests, and sometimes by a grizzly boar from the sierra.

The Spanish markets also afford a wondrous display of southern fruits and vegetables—whole mountains of golden melons and *sandias*, tons of tomatoes and pimientos (red pepper), prickly pears, purple-ripe figs, loquats, apricots, grapes, and other fruit according to season; with lettuces, wild asparagus and a host of other vegetables. From every house in the town comes a servant to purchase the day's requirements of fish, flesh, fowl, or fruit—for everything is bought and consumed from day to day. There is no "cold mutton" in a Spanish menu! By eight o'clock, but little remains unsold, so an early start is needed to see the best of the show.

To return to the muttons: it should be added that Spain is now practically the only European country which still

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exports wool to the London market—upwards of a million and a half pounds' weight of Spanish wool annually reaching the Thames.

Supplement.

Since writing the above, we have come across an interesting article on this subject in one of the best Spanish papers (the *Epoca*), from which we translate the following extracts, giving the native version of the present agricultural status :—"We must confess that the condition of Spanish agriculture is sufficiently deplorable, not only by reason of the apathy of its agriculturists, but also through the difficulties which the land presents to its perfect cultivation, to the use of manures, and the employment of modern machinery. It must be borne in mind that the land of the abrupt mountains of the Asturias, Galicia, and Cataluña condemns the country-people to the roughest and most laborious preparation. This is shared, though to a less extent, by the *labradores* of the arid regions of Guipúzcoa, Biscay and Navarre; of the rice-fields of Valencia, and on the sunburnt *vegas* of Andalucia and Estremadura. Besides these physical difficulties there are other disadvantages of hardly less importance. A vast extent of terrain now lies waste and uncultivated through lack of capital and sparseness of population; through the heavy tribute exacted by the state on agricultural produce, and the absence of means of communication to economize the transport of the harvest.

"Notwithstanding these immense difficulties, the Spanish agriculturist produces on fifty-six million *hectares* of cultivable land an excess over the consumption of sixty-one million *hectolitres** in cereals alone.

"The *superficies rustica* of Spain may be classed in the following form :—

* A hectare is, roughly, about an acre and a half. A hectolitre is equivalent to two and three-quarter bushels.

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"Without cultivation of any kind ...	42·8	per cent.*
Cultivated	28·6	,,
Pasture (*terreno de pasto*)	14·6	,,
Woods, orchards, and gardens ...	14·0	,,
	100·0	

"The average value of this superficies, according to annual production; and the capital which it represents, is as follows:—

Class.	Annual produce.	Capital.
'Cultivated	£180,400,000	£220,720,000
Pasture	31,960,000	153,280,000
Woods, gardens, &c....	31,568,000	49,280,000

"If we take into account that the 42·8 per cent.* of uncultivated land has also its 'prairie value,' it may be safely calculated that the landed property of Spain represents a sum of £560,000,000 (five hundred and sixty millions sterling).

"The number of inhabitants of Spain who devote themselves to agriculture is, according to the census returns, 4,821,875."

The same article gives a summary of the 22,291 mills and flour-factories of Spain, by which it appears the motive power used is as follows:—

Steam	374 (!)
Wind	541
Horses	56
Hand	787
Water (various systems)	20,533
Total	22,291

From a current number of a daily paper we cut the following advertisement, as showing the value set on *water* in thirsty Spain:—"To be let, the grazing-grounds (*dehesa*) of Junco Real, in the district (*termino*) of Chichlana. Contains 1,075 *fanegas* of brushwood and 237 of cultivation (*labor*), with SIX WELLS."

* 45·8 is the figure stated, but as that would exceed the 100 we have reduced it accordingly.

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CHAPTER XX.

BIRD-LIFE OF THE SPANISH SPRING-TIME.

I.—The Pinales, or Pine Region.

There are features of Spanish bird-life that give the subject a claim on the interest of British readers. Spain is the home of many of those species which we call "rare;" some of the rarest are here quite common. Especially is this the case with the large birds of prey, with many aquatic species—such as the beautiful Southern Herons—and various other bird-groups.

Lying midway between Europe and Africa, Spain also affords opportunity for the observation of migration—nearly all our British summer-birds can be observed here in transit, during the spring months: some, indeed, have wintered in Spain, while the rest appear on passage from Africa to the North.

More than this, Spain possesses a magnificent avi-fauna of her own, entirely unknown in England. Ornithologically, her southern provinces—at least in spring—might be included in what Mr. Sclater designates the "Cis-atlantean Subregion" (*Ibis*, 1891, p. 523), for their feathered denizens at that season approximate rather to the North African than to the European *ornis*.

Nor need these spring-notes be interesting *exclusively* to the naturalist: for observation in the wilder and more remote regions involves a degree of hard work and of field-craft that brings this bird-hunting fairly within the category of *sport*. Cases in point, as those of the Flamingo and Crane—elsewhere described, and of the eagles and large raptores. Here, for example, is one day's record from our diary:—"Camp at Navasso Redondo, *April* 18*th*.

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—Our captures to-day included 3 eagles, 4 kites, 2 large hawks, 5 ducks, an egret, 2 stone-plover, &c. First, Felipe woke me at day-break to say a pair of *aguiluchos* had just coursed and killed a hare within 200 yards of the tent. Turned out in jersey and *alparagatas*, and stalked the spot indicated, when a small eagle flew from a tree away in the scrub to the left. I stood up, thinking the game was gone, when a second Booted Eagle (*Aquila pennata*) rose from the ground not forty yards ahead, and was secured. Later on, during the mid-day heat, we *thrice* descried eagles perched on high trees—unusual luck. Both the first and second stalks failed, owing partly to bad marking in the first case, and to 'impossible' terrain in the second. The third, however, I killed—a very handsome tawny eagle. He was sitting on a pine in the centre of a circular swampy jungle: there was no considerable difficulty in creeping round the outside, nor till the final, direct approach commenced, when the ground became very bad —for the last 100 yards, strong briar-bound thicket and tussocks of spear-grass with deep bog-pools between, water up to one's waist. Had got to fifty yards when he saw me, and a lucky shot killed him as he opened his wings. Also stalked to-day two Harriers—a Marsh-Harrier (female) and a beautiful blue old Montagu: in the first case the stalk was supplemented by a short 'drive' by Felipe. At dusk we observed a pair of Serpent-Eagles go to roost in a large single *alcornoque:* waited till dark, when we crept, barefoot, towards the tree, one on either side, and I killed the female eagle as she flew out into the moonlight. During the day we had found five nests of the Kite—shot four birds for identification, two from nest, the others after long *puestos*—and also brought in, besides the eagles, &c., two Gadwall, a Garganey drake, two White-eyed Pochard, an egret, seven terns (various), several small birds, and twenty-nine eggs—a memorable day!" To stalk to within gunshot of an eagle, on the open plain, is almost as difficult an operation as any in our experience—that is unless, as sometimes happens, the conditions are unusually favourable.

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During several springs we have made ornithological expeditions each of a fortnight to three weeks' duration, in various parts of Andalucia (itself nearly as large as England), La Mancha, and Southern Estremadura. Between the great rivers Guadalquivír and Guadiana lies a wild region, almost abandoned to wild animals, and rich in picturesque desolation. The district is an undulating plain, its chief physical constituent being sand, or light sandy soil, clad over wide areas with pine-forest, elsewhere with open heaths which extend from the Atlantic to the confines of Estremadura and the border-land between Spain and Portugal, or rather of the ancient kingdom of the Algarves. The southern portion is known as the *Cotos del Rey* and *Doñana*, the latter, extending some forty miles inland from the sea, the property of the noble house bearing one of the oldest European titles—that of Medina Sidonia. The Coto de Doñana, as the name implies, is a preserve, and, owing to the circumstance of our having for many years been lessees of the sporting rights, this lovely wilderness has formed a favourite hunting-ground at all seasons. But we have also traversed some other of the wilder regions of the south—many quite as rich, zoologically—such, for example, as the wooded province of Córdova, the *vegas* of the Sierra Nevada and the environs of Almaden; and we now believe that, for the naturalist, the richest field of all is in Southern Estremadura and the almost unexplored borders of Guadiana. That river, from Daimiel downwards, flows through wildernesses of canebrake, abounding both in large and small game, and in spring-time with infinite variety of birds.

For our present purpose we have divided the Spanish plains into three sections:—the pine-forests, the open heaths, and the meres or lagoons; of these we will now take the *pinales*.

The first thing that strikes an Englishman in Spain is the number and variety of the birds of prey. At home we have practically exterminated these, but here they are ever in evidence, from massive eagles and yet larger vultures down to the smallest falcons. Those bald-headed fellows,

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hunting low with heavy flight, or "drifting" alternately on motionless pinions, are Marsh-Harriers; the long-winged hawks, like giant swallows, are the Montagu's Harrier. Buzzards are of more soaring flight, resembling in form the eagles, but lacking their regal presence; while the Kites are recognized by the deeply forked tail. Ever since Rugby days and the Kestrel's nest in Caldecott's classic spinney, the birds of prey have had a special attraction to the writer—to whom, *pace* the later lights of ornithological science, a hawk still holds the chief place among birds.

Starting on a bright April morning to traverse the *pinales* of La Marismilla, our first find was a nest of the Serpent-Eagle (*Circăetus gallicus*) built in the main fork of a stone-pine, a curiously twisted tree growing apart on a heathery knoll in a forest-glade. This, and all the nests of this eagle we have seen, was small, very thick in proportion to width, had a layer of dead leaves, and then a lining of twigs. This bird only lays one egg—large, rough, and white—which fact perhaps explains the relative smallness of their nests. Below are strewn many vertebræ of serpents; a female we shot had a snake four feet long in her beak, only a few inches hanging outside; another, killed at her nest in a mountain-forest of the sierra, had a rabbit; but snakes and large reptiles are their chief prey. Snakes abound in Spain, and some grow to great size, many reaching six feet in length, and we have killed lizards of nearly three.

The legs and feet of this eagle are pale bluish, and very rough—to hold their slippery prey. The eye is large, overhung, and very bright yellow; flight buoyant, but rather unsteady, and they show very white from below. Most reptiles hybernating, even in sunny Spain, the Serpent-Eagle is only a summer migrant—we have never observed it in the winter months. The date of arrival this year (1891) was March 8th. In 1888 we observed a pair as early as the 3rd.

Both eagles soared around so near that there was no difficulty in recognizing the species; indeed their heavy

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heads—almost owl-like—recurved wings and white undersides, cannot be mistaken.* Not requiring them as specimens, we continued our ride, and during the day found two nests of the Buzzard, each with three eggs; the only nests of this species found this spring—except one with young in June—the Buzzard being more numerous in winter, when almost every dead tree is occupied by one of these indolent hawks. All the Spanish-breeding Buzzards are of the normal dark brown type. The Goshawk (*Astur palumbarius*) we have also observed in these Andalucian forests both in spring and winter, but have not chanced to find it breeding here ourselves, though it is on record that it occasionally does so.

The next two nests discovered were both those of the Kite (*Milvus ictinus*), each on a lofty pine. There are in Spain two kinds of Kite, whose wild musical scream is characteristic of these lonely woodlands. There is the *Milano real*—the Red Kite, resident in Spain, and distinguishable from the migrant Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) by the broad white band on the under-wing, caused by the basal half of the primaries being white beneath (this band in *M. migrans* being smoke-grey), and by the more deeply forked tail. The Black Kite is altogether a more dusky coloured species.

The eggs of the two species, and those of Buzzards and others, are indistinguishable; it is therefore necessary to shoot or trap the birds from the nest to make sure of identification. But the Red Kite breeds earlier (at the end of March, and early in April) and in more secluded spots than its ally, whose habits, moreover, are, in places, almost gregarious. We have seen a score of Black Kites' nests in a small patch of wood, not two acres—but eggs are not laid till quite the end of April or early in May.

A singular, but well-known, habit of the Kite (the Red,

* The large irides and general appearance of this species seem to indicate crepuscular tendencies, and an affinity—obsolete or evolvent—to the *Strigidæ*, which is recognized in its generic name, *Circäetus*, next to the Harriers. But, in fact, the affinity is more apparent than real, for the Serpent-Eagle is of purely diurnal habits.

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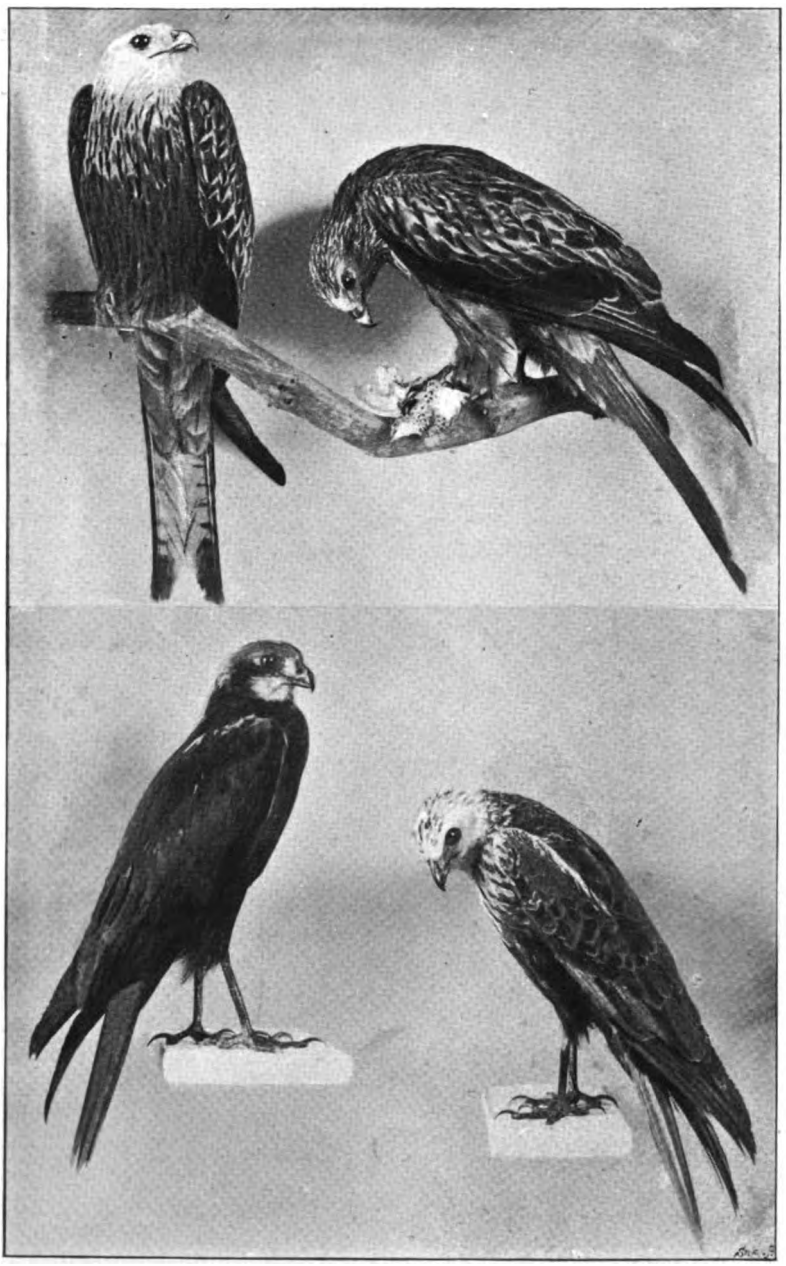

Plate XXX. KITES AND MARSH-HARRIERS. Page 242

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not the Black species) is to decorate their abodes with a collection of gaudy rags and other fantastic rubbish: in one case I found the dead and dried remains of a White Owl hung up, in others the long quill-feathers of the Spoonbill and other birds, a linen shirt-sleeve, old match-boxes, and similar sundries. But this curious custom was useful in saving many an unnecessary climb—no nest was worth going up to unless a rag or two fluttered in the breeze. The Kites, moreover, select the loftiest trees for their abodes, and owing to the habit of Spanish foresters to lop off all the lower branches of the pines when saplings, these trees grow up tall, straight, and slippery as fishing-rods. Fortunately for oological enterprise, the scant population of the *pinales* are mostly *piñaleros*—pine-cone gatherers. These pine-cones are used for fuel and for making a confection something like *nougat*. The tree-climbing abilities of the *pinaleros* are marvellous: in this way we obtained many eggs of Kite, Buzzard, Booted Eagle, and most of the forest-breeding species.

After a stiff climb to one Kite's nest, built in a tall branchless aspen, whose base was barricaded by clinging thorny briars, I was disappointed to find no eggs. The Kite had sat close, and I had just shot her from the nest: all around hung the customary decorations, yet the big nest appeared to contain nothing but a white rag. I turned this over, and there, beneath and almost wrapt in what proved to be a delicate cambric handkerchief, embroidered with the name "Antonia M.," lay two handsome eggs! The fair Andaluza who had lost this property might throw an interesting light on the distances traversed by Kites in the search thereof: Shakespeare warned her (*Winter's Tale*, Act IV., Sc. 2), "Where the Kite builds, look to lesser linen."

Another denizen of the *pinales* requires passing notice—the Raven. It is curious that in Spain these birds nest later than in northern lands. In Northumberland the Raven lays early in March, or even at the end of February, amidst snow and frost. Here, on the last day of April, we found two nests on pines not far apart. One was

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warmly lined with sheep's wool, but still empty; the other with rabbits' fur, and contained five fresh eggs.

The nests of Ravens, Kites, Buzzards, and Booted Eagles are hardly distinguishable from below, except that the eagle usually selects the main fork, the others building out on the lateral branches. In the crevices and foundations of all these large nests are often inserted the untidy, grass-built edifices of the chestnut-headed Spanish Sparrow (*Passer salicicolus*), a forest-loving species, not found in the haunts of men like his cousin of the streets, and having a special predilection for sharing the homes of the larger raptores, as our Sparrows at home build under the nests in a rookery.

The large birds of prey are always difficult to shoot, even at their nests: and for capturing them the circular steel-traps proved invaluable, saving much time and being almost certain in their action. The miseries of a *puesto*, or ambush, of an hour, or even two, lying on the burning sand, in the stifling heat of the underwood, to await the return of the birds, one does not forget. For minutes that pass like an eternity, the keen-eyed Kite will hover and sail overhead; meanwhile a hissing column of mosquitoes have focussed themselves over one's face: black ants, like small dumb-bells, and creeping things innumerable, penetrate up one's sleeve and down one's neck: while at the critical moment, when one must remain rigidly motionless, a huge hairy spider of hideous mien gently lowers itself on to one's nose.

A Kite or Buzzard is too cautious to return directly to the nest. Alighting first on a distant pine, it will approach by three or four flights, and at last one knows that the coveted prize sits well within shot, but either directly behind, or in such a position that (from the ambush) the gun cannot be brought to bear. The trap saved all this, and rarely failed to secure such specimens as were required —many caught by the beak and killed instantly.*

* Some Kites (*M. ictinus*), which had been feeding on reptiles, had a most offensive smell. The beak of the male, in this species, is *yellow* to the tip; in the female, horn-colour. The kites all lay *two*

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Plate XXXI. SAND-DUNES AND *CORRALES* OF DOÑANA. Page 245.

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A characteristic of the forests of Doñana are the enormous sand-hills—mountains of blown sand dazzling in the reflected sunlight, and devoid of green thing or trace of life, beyond the track of prowling Lynx or Mongoose, or the curious "broad-gauge" *vestigia* of the tortoise. Stay: there is a thin black strip of moving objects—they are all ants, and that is one of their great highways—a beaten track connecting two great industrial centres. Except on the chosen line—a mere strip barely an inch wide, though hundreds of yards in length—not another insect will be visible on the wastes of sand. To the selected route each member of their infinite community confines his course as systematically as the steamships of our great ocean lines. One cannot resist the temptation of interrupting this well-regulated microcosm. Instantly confusion spreads in the black ranks: around the point of obstruction the intercepted battalions spread out like a fan: the tumult and disorder extend backwards along either column till for yards the sand is carpeted with the fragments of a disorganized host. But these scattered units are each seeking to re-establish their lost continuity. The re-formed column deflects a little to pass on one side or the other (not both), and in a few minutes the "trade-route" has resumed its former monotonous regularity.

Elsewhere the sand-wastes are clothed, especially in their deeper dells and hollows, with cistus-scrub or tamarisk, and the stone-pine (*Pinus pinea*) somehow finds sustenance and even luxuriates. How plant-life can survive on the remnants of pulverized rock is a mystery—though here, perhaps, the deep-seated roots strike into alluvial soil below—and no more comprehensible in view of the analogous fact that the vines producing the richest Spanish wines also flourish in equally ungenial soils. The vintages of Jerez are garnered from grapes grown on arid and silicious soil: the strong red wine of Val-de-Peñas, so grateful in torrid Spain,

eggs, on the bare sticks—only once, in each case, have we found the dual number exceeded, viz., *M. ictinus*, three young, on May 2nd; *M. migrans*, three eggs, on May 10th. We have found the eggs of the first-named as early as the closing days of March.

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comes, literally, from a "valley of stones," and in the Alto Douro the vineyards occupy hillsides composed of little bits of (what looks like) broken slate and disintegrated shale, so little coherent, that the slopes must be terraced before they are cultivable. Strange anomalies—plant a vine in rich soil, and you get vine leaves—in tropical lands, the vine becomes a barren evergreen—in arid soil or shale, it produces nectar.

Firm and compacted as appears the substance of these sand-hills—the sandstone of a future age—it yet retains, to some extent, its shifty and unstable character. At intervals its masses elect to move onwards and to engulf forests over which, for centuries, they have impended. Immediately below where we sit, the ridge terminates, abrupt as a precipice. Two hundred yards beyond, the sloping sand-foot is studded with half-buried pines—several forest monarchs already entombed to their centres, alive, but struggling in their death-throes. Of others, farther back, only the topmost branches protrude, sere, yellow, and dead, from the devouring particles. And beneath those glistening sands, hidden far from sight, doubtless there rest the skeletons of buried forests of bygone days.

Just above us in the peak of the stone-pine under whose shade we enjoy the midday rest, is a huge platform of sticks—a deserted throne of the king of birds. Now this eyrie is deserted, the daylight shows through its centre, and the tree is occupied by different tenants—a pair of Cushats: before now we have seen them share the same tree with the tyrant. Bird-notes are hushed during the midday heat, and silence reigns over the forest: presently from afar comes the strident *kark, kark* of the Raven, and then from mid-air resounds the musical scream of a Kite floating in the heaven above.

Riding along the open glades, the most conspicuous birds in spring are the brilliant Rollers and Hoopoes, parties of Hawfinches and Crossbills, always shy, an occasional Spotted Cuckoo (*C. glandarius*) or Southern Grey Shrike (*L. meridionalis*); handsome Woodchats (*L.*

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rufus) scold in every bush, and various Finches and Woodpeckers, Tits and Creepers, enliven the woodlands, and sprightly Rufous Warblers the drier plain. Among the cane-brakes and *carices* that fringe the marshy hollows skulk several other warblers—the Great Sedge and Black-headed Warblers (*S. arundinacea* and *melanocephala*), Orphean, Cetti's, and the little Fantail, besides our familiar Willow-Wrens, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Redstarts and Robins—the latter resident, and very bright in colour. The Black Redstart has already disappeared (April), but from day to day one sees our British migrants arriving, resting, or passing forward on their northern journey. Swallows especially are conspicuous: to-day the air is alive with them, sweeping along the open glades: to-night they roost in chattering hosts in the trees around our camp—to-morrow they are gone, not a swallow remains: and this occurs a dozen times during April and May.

On April 13th and two following days there occurred a conspicuous "through transit" of Pied Flycatchers, and two days later (in another year) the brushwood was alive with Redstarts, all on passage. On the 25th we were visited for a couple of hours by hundreds of Alpine Swifts: and the same evening the large Red-necked Nightjars (*C. ruficollis*) arrived, to add their churring note to the crepuscular chorus of frogs and night-birds for the rest of the spring and summer. One evening in May, while watching a pair of Golden Orioles to their nest, I witnessed a rather curious eviction. A Spanish Green Woodpecker (*Gecinus sharpii*), her gullet crammed with ants, flew to a hole in a wild-olive, but was met at the entrance by a furious Little Owl (*Athene noctua*), which soon drove the clumsier bird (which had no idea of self-defence) screaming to the shelter of some brushwood. Soon after, her mate returned, but met with a similar reception, the savage little owl perching meanwhile on an adjacent branch, where he sat bolt upright, all fluffed out, and snapping with rage. On examining the place, I found the woodpeckers had a numerous family, nearly ready to fly: while the owl had

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deposited a single egg in an adjoining hole. The execution of the aggressor seemed, at first, the only means of saving this thriving family, but, on second thoughts, I decided that the justice of the case would be met by removing the defendant's egg, and filling up his hole with sticks.

The Orioles' nest I shortly afterwards discovered, built in a white-elm, at the extreme end of a long pendant

HOOPOES.

branch, the whole of which it was necessary to cut down. This nest, however, was empty. The Golden Orioles do not lay till nearly the middle of May, and from the shyness of the old birds, and the aërial situation of the nest, their eggs are among the most difficult to obtain.

During the early part of May we found many nests of

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Hoopoes, some in hollow trees, one in a ruined outhouse, which we were using as a stable, and which, in a previous year, had been similarly occupied by a Roller, and always affords a home to two or three pairs of the Spotless or Sardinian Starling (*Sturnus unicolor*), a species which, in spring, replaces the common kind. On the outskirts of the woods were many nests of Goldfinch and Serinfinch, Common and Green Linnets, Blue and Great Tit, Willow-Wren, Woodchat, &c.; and in the open rushy glades, those of Black-headed Warbler, Blackcap and Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Grey-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla cinereocapilla*), and others. I looked in vain in these pine-woods for the Crested Tit, which occurs near Gibraltar, and which my brother found numerous in Navarre. On the 10th May I found a couple of Nightingales' nests in the tiny garden-patch adjoining a forester's cot, and a week later obtained several nests of the Melodious Willow-Warbler (*Hypolais polyglotta*) with their beautiful vinous-pink eggs; later still (May 28th), those of the Rufous Warbler (*Ædon galactodes*) among the cactus-bushes:—but this is getting suspiciously like a catalogue.

One circumstance deserves passing remark—the relatively smaller number of eggs laid in the south than is the case with many of the same species further north. In Spain, several of the warblers, &c. above mentioned, lay only four eggs; the Blackbird, as a rule, but three, and these much brighter coloured than at home.

Delightful days were those spent riding through these pathless forests, redolent of the exhalations of pine and rosemary, and a hundred aromatic shrubs, and resplendent with the glory of the southern spring-time. What words can convey the contrast of dark *pinal* and dazzling sand-waste, or catch the play of sunlight glancing through massed foliage on russet trunks and the soft pale verdure of the brushwood? For long leagues these forests stretch unbroken save by rushy glades and park-like opens, where at dusk the Red Deer come to seek rich pasturage, and the Wild Boar ploughs deep trenches in his search for succulent roots, varied by a *bonne-bouche* of mole-crickets.

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CHAPTER XXI.

BIRD-LIFE OF THE SPANISH SPRING-TIME.

II.—The Cistus-Plains and Prairies.

Leaving the pinal, or pine region, let us spend a fortnight in the open bush-land beyond. Passing successively the famous manchas of the Alameda Honda, the Rincon de los Carrizos, and Majáda Real—each coverts of repute, though all unknown to geographers and marked upon no map—we traverse next the forest-glades of the Angosturas, and enter upon a different region, where fresh landscapes and new beauties await appreciative eyes. Here the swelling sand-dunes trend away southwards—towards the sea. The dark bushy pine gives place to open heath and brushwood, stretching away to the horizon, here and there diversified with scattered clumps of cork-oak, aspen, wild-olive, and poplar.

The country around our quarters is a level plain of evergreen scrub—lentiscus, broom, heaths of varied kinds, and mile upon mile of sombre grey-green cistus, generally about shoulder-high, but deepening in places into impassable jungle. Here and there are stagnant pools, around whose banks grow immense cork-oaks, embedded amidst tree-heath (*Erica arborea*), giant heather and arbutus, all interlaced with the twining, thorny fronds of briar. It is in these dank, dark depths that the old boars select their lairs, and they are the home of Lynx and Wild-Cat, Badger, Genet, and Mongoose, and of many interesting birds, from the Eagle to the Turtledove. The following record of some of our spring rambles will give an outline of the fauna of this region:—

April 15th.—We were astir early, a few stars shining

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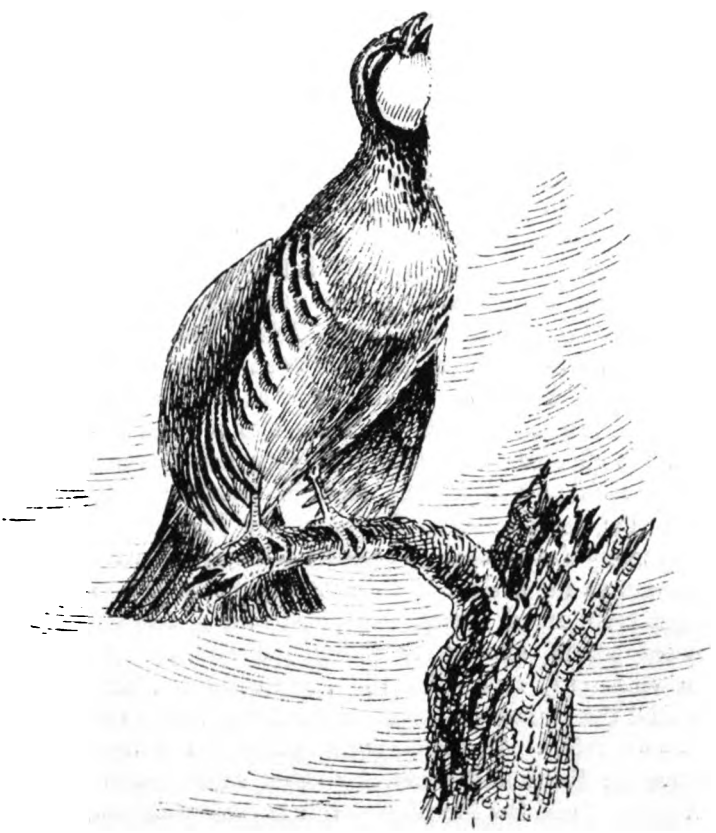
dimly, and the last of the frogs still croaking in the *acequias*, as we sipped our matutinal chocolate upon the verandah;

βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ,
βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ,

repeat the frogs, as in the Stygian chorus of old. Far away over the half-lit expanse of cistus a pair of large



A SERENADE.

eagles were already hunting for their breakfast, and an owl slipped close overhead and disappeared into a crevice of the roof above, where we could hear the snoring and snapping of the strigine community as the night's booty

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was being discussed. We were away by sunrise, at which hour the singular, resonant song of the Partridge-cocks (Red-legs) was ubiquitous: from almost every ilex-grove came the half-choking *chukàr, chukàr*, while the love-sick bird bowed and gesticulated, standing nearly bolt upright with half-expanded wings on some dead branch or shattered trunk, sometimes on the crest of a sand-ridge.*

Within a quarter-mile of the lodge we found a Kite's nest, shot the old bird, replaced her two eggs with two hen's eggs and a steel-trap: and had hardly ridden two hundred yards ere the male swept down and was caught. Seldom are so fine a pair of birds secured so easily! During this day we found no fewer than six nests, for the Kite, as before stated, prefers the open country to the forest, and almost each clump of cork-trees was tenanted by a pair. These cork-groves are also occupied by many other species —by birds of plumage whose resplendent hues appear almost tropical—such as Golden Oriole, Roller, Bee-eater, Hoopoes, Woodpeckers, Azure-winged Magpie, and others hardly less brilliant. Amid the ilex-groves the Golden Oriole hangs suspended, hovering like a Kestrel in mid-air, his rich orange lustre justifying the Spanish name —*oropendola:* the Roller, clad in chestnut and azure, and rich parti-coloured Hoopoes and Pied Woodpeckers flit among the foliage. Presently a harsh "chack, chack" announces the arrival of a wandering party of Bee-eaters, most brilliant of European birds; and a score of these sweep round, alternately rising and poising, or soaring on clean-cut, hawk-like wing, then darting downwards amidst the masses of flowering heaths in pursuit of industrious *aphidæ*. The Bee-eaters pass on: but there is no truce for the insect-world, for other deadly enemies, the Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, sit by on every bush, intent on impaling heavy-flying bee or beetle. From the

* Partridges commence this love-song as early as February. In March it is continuous at sunrise and towards dusk. Here is an attempt to syllable it:—

"Chŭck, chŭck . . . churroùk, churroùk,
Chukàr, chukàr, chōūk!"

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alcornoques there resounds the shrieking maniacal laughter of the flame-coloured Spanish Woodpecker (*Gecinus sharpii*) as he flies heavily from tree to tree with rustling, undulated flight: then there is an occasional Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cookii*), there are Wood-Pigeons and Turtle-Doves, Spotted Cuckoos, and Magpies in swarms. The cavernous trunks are occupied by colonies of Jackdaws, less hoary-naped than ours, the lesser crevices by Hoopoes, Scop's and Little Owls.

Nearly all the brilliantly-plumaged birds which at this season lend a semi-tropical character to the Spanish avi-fauna, are spring-migrants—pouring across the straits during the months of March and April, and retiring to African latitudes in autumn. Here is a brief record, showing dates of arrival, &c., chiefly from the observations of one year (1891), but supplemented where necessary by those of previous springs, with a few incidental notes.

February 21*st*.—Many Swallows arrived: in thousands on 23rd—a complete nuisance while snipe-shooting. On February 28th some were already beginning to nest.

February 26*th*.—A single Hoopoe arrived: numerous by 3rd March. Also observed a Goshawk.

February 28*th*.—A pair of Egyptian Vultures, and many Lesser Kestrels were seen to-day.

March 1*st*.—Great Spotted Cuckoo, and a single Wheat-ear appeared. Many of the Wigeon and other ducks, and all Golden Plovers are now gone. Shot four Garganey.

March 8*th*.—First Serpent-Eagle (two more on 10th), and many Black Kites, in *pinales*. The White Wagtails entirely disappeared about this date. Landrail shot.

March 10*th*.—Hundreds of Wood-Pigeons—all gone next day. Shot a pair of Black Storks (1869).

March 13*th*.—Last Woodcock. Not one-fifth of the ducks now remain in marisma.

March 19*th*.—Shot Scop's Owl in garden at Jerez.

March 20*th*.—Observed Kentish and Lesser Ring Plovers, and shot Purple Heron. Flights of Cranes passing north.

March 24*th*.—Observed Short-toed Larks, and Spotless

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Starling; Black-headed Gulls still here, in full breeding-plumage. Ruff and Black-tailed Godwits shot to-day.

March 26th.—Ring-Ouzel (Sierra Bermeja), and in same district, Booted Eagle on 29th, Woodchat 30th, and Rock-Thrush on April 3rd.

March 30th (1883).—Woodchats: and first Cuckoo heard in garden. Starlings, Thrushes and Sky-larks have all gone.

March 31st (1872).—Swarms of Bee-eaters, Eared and Russet Wheatears, and two or three Rollers.

March 31st (1891).—While away in sierra, the following birds have appeared: Savi's, Spectacled, and Subalpine Warblers (all obtained), Cirl-Buntings, Swifts.

April 3rd.—Nightingales in garden. They do not sing for the first few days. First eggs laid May 7th.

April 6th.—Montagu's Harrier arrived (the last Hen-Harrier shot on 10th). Demoiselle Crane shot.

April 8th.—Turtle-Doves in small flights, and many Bee-eaters and Rollers arrived. Last Snipe shot to-day.

April 9th.—Pratincoles, Whiskered and Lesser Terns.

April 10th.—Pair Marbled Ducks, one Nyroca Pochard, and an Egret shot. Observed White-faced Ducks.

April 16th.—Glossy Ibis—Zopiton.

April 20th.—The following have arrived within the last week or ten days. Great Sedge Warbler, Orphœan and Garden Warblers, Whitethroat, Ortolan, and Golden Orioles—the latter seen first to-day.

April 23rd.—Pair Hobbies observed—*pinales*.

April 25th.—Alpine Swifts passing over.

April 27th.—Shot Buff-backed Heron, Isla Menor: and found Bittern's nest with three eggs; also two of the Great Bustard, each with two eggs.

April 28th.—Night-Herons observed—marisma Gallega.

April 29th.—Rufous Warblers (*Ædon galactodes*) arrived in hundreds. On same date Honey-Buzzards passing northwards, flying quite low against a north-easterly gale, in large bands. A friend, shooting Turtle-Doves in the *pinales* of San Fernando, killed six. These Buzzards pass yearly in hundreds (both adults and immature), on one or two days at this period, but usually fly very high.

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April 30*th*.—Shot the first Russet-necked Nightjar and observed Melodious Willow-Warblers (*Hypolais polyglotta*). Enormous passage of Swallows to-day. This is also the date when the Little Bittern and Squacco Heron are due.

May 3*rd*.—Black Terns appeared. The only other nesting species yet to arrive are the Spotted Flycatcher, Pallid Warbler (*Hypolais opaca*), and the remainder of the Nightjars, Rufous Warblers, &c.

May 4*th*.—Camp in mid-marisma. All this night, commencing about 10 P.M., a stream of migrating birds kept passing overhead. From the dark sky resounded for hours the cries of gulls and terns, sundry small land-birds, whimbrels, plovers and sandpipers of various species: besides harsher shrieks and notes that resembled those of hawks and herons of some kind.

Amidst such wealth of bird-life lies work for many spring-visits. The nesting-season, moreover (the most interesting period to the ornithologist), extends over a greater period of time than is the case at home. In Spain, with its early spring and warm equable climate, it might be supposed that most birds would nest both early and more or less simultaneously. But this is not the case. The period of reproduction, with birds, appears to be prolonged proportionately as one approaches the equator. In the far north, where summer is short and sharply defined, this period is the same. Thus in the arctic lands of Spitsbergen and Novaya Zemlya, it is limited to six weeks, and in Lapland and Siberia to two months or so, extending in Central Europe, roughly speaking, to three. In Andalucia domestic duties last, with one species or another, over half the year. There are cases in which nidification commences before Christmas—as with the Lammergeyer, Bonelli's Eagle, and the Eagle-Owl: the Griffon Vultures and some others are only a little later. Whereas, on the other hand, some of the herons do not nest till June: *Ædon galactodes* and the Little Bustard are still incubating in July, and the Flamingoes breed so late that their young can hardly be on the wing before the latter month.

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Among the earlier breeders is the Spanish Green Woodpecker, which drills deep holes in the hard wood of cork-oak or olive, and lays six shining white eggs in March. Now (April) they had young, but rear a second brood in May. Though they are so abundant, yet the "tapping" sound characteristic of the Woodpeckers is not heard in the Spanish forests, for their food consists of ants and of the small, red and black beetles that cluster in every crevice of the rough cork-bark.

The Rollers were also laying in mid-April—here in hollow trees, elsewhere in crevices of rocks or ruins: but wherever their treasure may be, the silly birds are sure to disclose its position by their incessant "caterwauling," and anxious, tumbling flight. On the 17th April we found the first nest of the Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*) in a high mastic-bush. The nest resembled that of the Missel-Thrush, the five eggs larger and more darkly marbled than those of the northern *L. excubitor*. Nests of the Woodchat (*L. rufus*) may be found in almost every bush from May 10th onward, and the Bee-eaters have then formed swarming colonies in the river-banks like Sand-Martins.

As remarkable a freak as any in nature is the system of reproduction by proxy adopted by the Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Coccystes glandarius*). This smart and handsome bird, though more abundant in Estremadura and the Castiles, is fairly numerous on the wooded prairies of Andalucia, where its curious nesting habits may be observed with ease. The parasitic habits of the European *Cuculidæ* are well known—none of these birds building a nest or rearing their own young. Our British Cuckoo deposits its eggs singly in the nests of hedge-sparrow, warbler, wagtail, or other small bird—it is not particular which. The Spotted Cuckoo, however, does not impose this duty of rearing her young upon her neighbours generally, but almost exclusively upon the common Magpie: though exceptionally upon the Azure-winged species (*Cyanopica cookii*) and the Raven as well. At the Encinar del Visco, during the past year (1891), the writer found two of the

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Cuckoo's eggs in a nest of that bird, along with three eggs (one broken) of the owner.*

The Spotted Cuckoo, moreover, lays eggs so exactly resembling those of the selected foster-mother (the Magpie) as to be hardly distinguishable. On close examination, it is true, they do differ in their more ellipitic form and granular surface: but, unless previously aware and specially on the look-out, no one, probably, would suspect they were not Magpie's eggs—apparently not even that 'cute bird itself does so. Even so experienced an ornithologist as Canon Tristram failed to discriminate the difference—this was in Algeria—till the zygo-dactylic foot of the embryos betrayed the secret (*Ibis*, 1859).

The Spotted Cuckoo deposits two, three, and even four eggs in the *same* Magpie's nest—sometimes leaving the original owner's eggs undisturbed, in other cases removing all or part of them: we have noticed spilt yolk and the shells of broken eggs at the entrance to the nest and on the branches below. Hatched thus, in the domed and enclosed nests of the Magpie, it seems difficult for the young Spotted Cuckoos to eject their pseudo-brothers and sisters; but we cannot speak definitely as to this detail in the early life-history of these curious usurpers of hearth and home.

The only egg of the Common Cuckoo we have ever found in Spain was in a nest of the Stonechat. This was on April 23rd, and there were four eggs of the Stonechat. The Cuckoo is common in Spain on passage, arriving early in April; a few remain to breed, and we have heard their note up to the end of May, but the majority pass on northwards at once.

The Azure-winged Magpie, above referred to, is very local in the south. It nests not far from Jerez, and in some numbers near Coria del Rio, but is much more abundant in the wooded *vegas* of Cordova, and still more so in Estremadura and Castile, actually swarming near Talavera de la Reyna, at Aranjuez, etc. Their nests,

* In Egypt the Grey-backed Crow (*Corvus cornix*) is almost exclusively the Cuckoo's dupe; in Algeria, *Pica mauritanica*.

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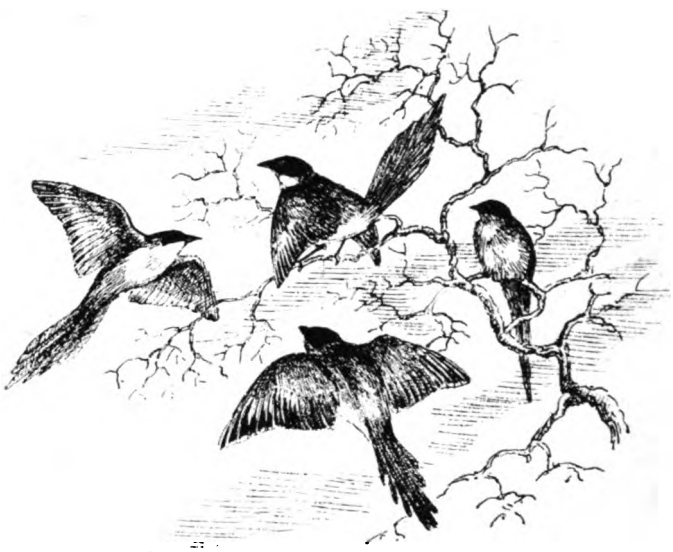
placed on bushes rather than trees, resemble a Jay's, slightly built of sticks exteriorly, and completed with green moss, dry grass, etc., and contain five or six eggs. Half-a-dozen nests may often be found within a hundred yards. An active, sprightly bird, exclusively confined to the Spanish Peninsula.

The Jay, though common in the mountain-forests, and in Portugal, is not seen on the South-Spanish plains; but the Magpie absolutely swarms. During lunch one



AZURE-WINGED MAGPIES.

day I counted upwards of seventy in sight at a time, and from one spot. A rushy glade before us was dotted all over with them; their pied breasts surmounted nearly every bush. Further away, I also counted during the half-hour's halt (without including such small fry as Kestrels, etc.) no less than twenty-one large birds of prey —several Kites of both kinds, a soaring Buzzard or two, Marsh- and Montagu's Harriers, and at least a pair of eagles.

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Such a spectacle would probably break the heart of an orthodox British gamekeeper; to preserve any fair head of game in presence of such an array of "vermin"—both powerful raptores and cunning egg-thieves—he would certainly assert to be impossible. So, in England, it probably would be; yet here our game-books record bags varying from 150 to 300 partridge, besides other game, in a day, and totals of from 1,000 to 1,200 head and upwards in a fortnight's shooting. Yet those who advocate the *status quo* in nature and condemn dogmatically any interference therewith by the hand of man, would be wrong in jumping to the conclusion that the co-existence in Spain of a considerable head of game with a host of their most powerful enemies, is any solid substantiation of their theories, in a *general* sense.

To this question of nature's balance of life we may devote a little space; it is seldom so simple as at first sight may appear. Here in Spain its solution depends on factors some of which do not exist and would have, consequently, no bearing at home; but the general features of the particular case in point may be summed up in three lines: (1) Spain is a land teeming with reptile-life; (2) The reptiles in the aggregate are the most deadly enemies to game; and (3) it is upon reptiles that the raptorial birds habitually prey.

The large eagles, it is true, prefer rabbits and partridges to anything else; but the "catch" of their smaller relatives, the Booted and Serpent-Eagles, the Kites, Buzzards and Hawks, is composed chiefly of reptiles—lizards, snakes, blindworms, salamanders, and the like—as well as the larger insects, such as locusts, cicadas, scorpions, grasshoppers, the huge horned scarabæi and other coleoptera of which so great a variety abound in Southern Spain. At the end of this chapter we annex a brief analysis, the result of a number of post-mortem examinations of the crops and stomachs of various raptorial birds, which shows pretty conclusively that while game, etc., is included in their *menu*, by far the greater portion of their attack is directed against the reptile race—itself

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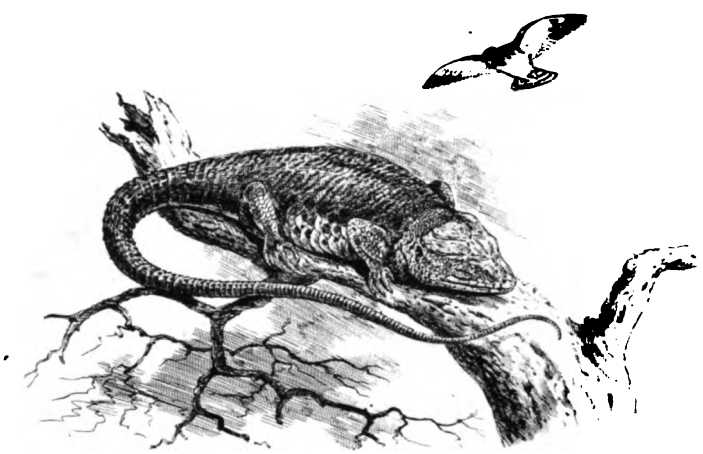
the most pernicious to game and all the defenceless creation. It is, in fact, a warfare of raptor *versus* raptorem, of feathered freebooter against scaled marauder, and the harmless and peaceful balance of creation benefit by that internecine state of war.

The destruction that is wrought by the larger reptiles is difficult to exaggerate; both snakes and lizards are inveterate egg-stealers, and also devour large quantities of young game, whether furred or feathered, besides other creatures. Gliding noiselessly, rapidly, and with an infinite



EYED-LIZARD AND SERPENT-EAGLE

stealth, their approach is imperceptible, whether through brushwood or scrub, through shallow water or yielding sand, whether above ground or below—they penetrate the deep burrows of rabbit or Bee-eater, and scale the loftiest fortresses of tree-nesting species. Equally at home on the ground or amongst the topmost branches, nothing can well escape the larger serpents and saurians. Were they not held in check by nature's counterpoise, hardly a young rabbit could survive, or a Partridge, Quail, or Wild Duck succeed in rearing their broods. Neither ground nor tree-nesting birds are safe: we have

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seen a Cushat's nest which in the morning had contained its two eggs, occupied towards evening by the sleeping coils of a green Eyed Lizard (*Lacerta ocellata*), measuring nearly a yard in length, and thousands of promising families are yearly called into existence only to provide sustenance for cold-blooded, scaly saurians.

Here are three or four examples extracted from our note-book:—

"*April* 23*rd*.—While on the sand-ridge overlooking the laguna de Santolalla, watching a pair of Marbled Ducks, some Crested Grebes, etc., heard subterranean scuffling and rumblings. Presently two rabbits bolted, and from a hole close by emerged the writhing tail of a great green lizard, backing out, and dragging, by an engulfed hind leg, a half-grown rabbit, too terrified to squeal. In some rushes we lost sight of the reptile, but two minutes later, put him out and shot him. The hapless rabbit was then gorged—head downwards."

"*May* 18*th*.—Dug out a Bee-eater's colony—some of the tunnels quite eight or ten feet deep. In two of the nests found snakes, coiled up. One big black fellow entombed the remains of four or five Bee-eaters, swallowed entire, besides many eggs. The smaller snake contained eggs and a brace of Field-mice."

"*May* 23*rd*.—Heard two Partridges in a great state of excitement; coming up, saw a snake in the act of devouring a half-feathered chick. The brute, which only measured three feet, nine inches, already contained four young Partridges!"

"*June* 9*th*.—Shot a huge *Coluber*, six feet two inches, greatly distended in centre. On opening him found two nearly full-grown rabbits, swallowed whole."

Under such conditions, the presence of the hawk-tribe is an actual advantage to the game-preserver—they are his under-keepers and vermin-trappers. No doubt, were it possible, *first*, to put down effectually the rapacious reptiles, and *then* to thin the ranks of the rapacious birds, the result would be a prodigious increase in the numbers of the game and other defenceless creatures on which they

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prey. This—*mutatis mutandis*—is practically what game-preservation has accomplished in England; but in Spain the physical conditions are different, and it is more than questionable if any similar measure of success could there be attained. Not Don Quixote himself ever conceived an enterprise more chimerical than the extermination of the snakes in La Mancha or Andalucia.

With the first of the daylight the eagles and most of the larger raptores turn out for their morning hunt, and during the heat of the day retire to enjoy a siesta on the

THE EAGLE'S SWOOP.

peak of some lofty oak or pine, where they remain conspicuously perched for hours together. Towards evening predatory operations are generally resumed. It is curious to observe their different methods of going to work; the Kites sweep about with buoyant, desultory flight, not unlike large gulls; the *Circäetus* wheels in wide circles over the cistus-scrub; Montagu's Harrier hunts with impetuous flight, in long, straight bee-lines close over the *mancha*, always appearing about to alight but not doing so. But for systematic searching-out of a breadth of land, none compare with the Imperial Eagle; usually in pairs, these

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noble tyrants choose a line of country, and with wide sweeps to right and left, crossing and recrossing each other at the central point like well-trained setters, they beat miles of scrub in a few hours, while a Buzzard or Marsh-Harrier will hover and circle round a single spot and spend half a day over a few acres of rushes. Nothing can well escape the eagles; shortly one of the pair detects the hidden game—for an instant his flight is checked to assure a deadly aim, then with collapsed wings, and a rushing sound which is distinctly audible a quarter of a mile away, he dashes headlong to earth. A second or two later, he rises with loud vociferations, and a hapless rabbit suspended from his yellow claws. Their short, sharp bark is repeatedly uttered by the eagles while hunting. Rabbits seem to constitute nine-tenths of their prey, to judge from the golgotha of these little animals' skulls below their nests.

The Stone-Curlew (*Œdicnemus crepitans*) is another fine species characteristic of the scrub, where it is resident or at least is found throughout the year, and their rectilineal footprints are everywhere visible on the sandy deserts. On these flat plains they are most difficult of access, and if winged, run like a hare; towards evening they become very noisy, piping something like a Curlew in spring—on the night of April 16th, while skinning a lynx by the light of our fire, the air around seemed full of them, their vociferations resounding from every side. We found the first nest, or rather a single egg lying on bare sand, on April 18th. We have come across these birds in widely different situations; high out on the barren stony mountains of the Minho, in Northern Portugal, packs of them frequented the few damp spots along the courses of the old Roman aqueducts—how few such weak spots were, testifies to the solidity of these ancient works. This was in November. Their local name there was "Mountain Curlew" (Masarico de montes). Apropos of these hills, the following rather curious incidents are perhaps worth recording. Far out among the boulder-strewn ridges, while Red-leg shooting, we used to find numbers of Green Wood-

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peckers miles away from trees—they were attracted thither by the swarms of ants. Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europæus*) and Little Owls also abode there; the latter fluttered out from under one's feet, and after a most un-owlish, up-and-down flight, would dive back under some big boulder, more like a fish than a bird. Small flights of Teal also resorted to these heights during the day, sitting among the heather, and returning to the marshes at night.

Food of Spanish Raptorial Birds—Analyses of examinations of their crops—as follows:—

(*See* p. 259.)

Kites examined, 21.

Snakes, Lizards, Blindworms, &c.	9 cases.
Locusts, elytra of coleoptera, &c.	9 „
Bones and remains of small birds	5 „
Rabbits and young Redlegs (1 each)	2 „
Egg-shells	0 „

Note.—We have shot Black Kites fairly crammed with Locusts.

Harriers examined, 17.

Frogs, Snakes and other reptiles	8 cases.
Egg-shells	7 „
Scorpions, coleoptera and other insects	3 „
Game (1 Quail, 1 young and 1 putrid rabbit)	3 „

The Marsh-Harrier in spring seeks frogs, eggs, and young birds; in winter, frogs, wounded birds, and chance reptiles.

Montagu's Harrier takes chiefly the lesser reptiles and eggs—occasionally rabbits—and departs entirely in winter.

Large Eagles examined, 8.

Rabbits, Partridge, &c.	8 cases.
Reptiles, eggs, or insects	0 „

Small Eagles examined, 10.

Rabbits and other game	4 cases.
Reptiles (no eggs or insects)	4 „
Small birds	3 „
Sundries (1 young eagle! *See* p. 215)	1 „

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The large eagles prey on game all the year round; the smaller species chiefly on reptiles and small birds, secondarily on game. In winter the latter depart to Africa.

FALCONS.—The smaller species are chiefly insectivorous—the Lesser Kestrel and Eleanora Falcon exclusively so. The Common Kestrel and Hobby also take small lizards and snakes. From the crop of one of the large and powerful Falcons (*Falco punicus*) which, when shot, was in the act of pursuing a Hare, we have taken nearly a score of Blindworms.

It is corroborative of the predominance of reptiles and insects in their diet, that so many of the raptores leave Spain almost entirely in winter. Both the Booted and Serpent-Eagles, Black Kite, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, and others, migrate at that season to Africa.

BLACK STORK.

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CHAPTER XXII.

BIRD-LIFE OF THE SPANISH SPRING-TIME.

III.—By Lake and Lagoon.

Spain is not a land of lakes; the so-called lagoons are often mere accumulations of flood-water, the result of the winter's rains which occupy shallow basins, or swamp the low-lying lands. Many of these hybernal lagoons dry up entirely as the hot weather sets in; others remain in greatly reduced proportions, hidden, as a rule, amidst reeds and dense aquatic herbage.

Few Spanish lakes cover any considerable area, though the Lagunas de Janda, near Trafalgar, those of Fuentepiedra near Malaga, and the Albufera of Valencia, are exceptions.

The Laguna de Janda, an inland sea of yellow muddy water, surrounded by belts of sedge and cane-brake stretching away for miles, is a well-known wildfowl resort, abounding in winter with Grey Geese, ducks, and divers of many kinds, besides Snipe, Rails, Bitterns, and aquatic birds in all their varieties. The dry plateaux on the north are a notable resort of Little Bustard; and large bags of Quail and Golden Plover are there, at times, secured. But this is well-known ground, and having been described by others, we will only add that in spring Janda is noteworthy as one of the breeding-stations of the Crane (*Grus communis*), which still nests in some numbers amidst the vast area of reed-beds and thick swamp that lie towards Casa Vieja.

The nests of the Crane are huge accumulations of flags and aquatic plants built up in the shallow marsh, and hidden amidst the growing reeds, which in spring com-

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pletely conceal the water. The Crane lays two handsome eggs, greenish in hue, but suffused with brown splashes and obsolete shades, about the end of April. Formerly the Crane used also to breed in the marismas of the Guadalquivir, but we have not met with it there of recent years, and fear it is already banished for ever from that resort. It may sincerely be hoped that these majestic waterfowl, whose stately appearance and resonant trumpet-note lend so peculiar a charm to the wild solitudes they frequent, may meet with more considerate treatment in their last stronghold at Janda.

Of the Mar Menor of Cartagena, the Albufera of Valencia, and other noteworthy wildfowl resorts lying outside our limits, we can speak with less certainty, not having had such opportunities of exploration as in the districts to the S. and W. The Albufera appears to be the western limit of the range of the handsome Red-crested Pochard (*Fuligula rufina*), a duck we have sought in vain in Andalucia; but with this exception, and that of a few stragglers, such as *Hydrochelidon leucoptera* and other species of more Eastern distribution, the spring avifauna of these localities does not materially differ from that of the more western marismas and lagoons described either in the present chapter or in those entitled "The Bætican Wilderness."

The lakes of Doñana are of no great extent, the largest being the Lagunas de Santolalla, and the broad, reed-choked Rocina de la Madre extending towards Rocio, all of which we have explored at different seasons.

Riding towards the small lagoon of Zopiton on April 16th, its surface was seen to be dotted all over with waterfowl—ducks and divers, coots and grebes. Zopiton is a deep, reed-fringed pool where we have often looked in vain for *Fuligula rufina*. On our approach, several Mallards and Gadwall flew up: I shot a Gadwall drake from horseback, whereupon there was commotion among the denizens of that sequestered lagoon—ducks rose splashing and quacking on all sides, coots "skittered" across the surface, grebes vanished amidst sedges, whence

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a Marsh-Harrier soared from her nest. Among the ducks which whistled around and overhead were many of a small dark species unknown to us. These appeared loth to leave, and after the others had disappeared, continued circling round, high in the air, with rapid rustling flight like that of a Golden-eye. By creeping out to a rush-clad point we lay concealed between sedges and a thicket of briar, and here soon shot several of these ducks, as well as Mallard, Garganey, and another Gadwall or two. The unknown birds proved to be the White-eyed Pochard, or Ferruginous Duck (*Fuligula nyroca*) which evidently intended to breed here, though a search for their nests proved futile. A month later, however (in May), we obtained nests both of this Pochard and of the Gadwall, both built among rushes on dry ground. The Gadwall —inappropriately termed in Spanish "*Silbon real*" (*i.e.* king-wigeon, or whistler)—is a very silent duck, and always seen in pairs. In May we found them singly, those shot then being all drakes rising from small sedgy pools.

The Garganey are fairly numerous on these lagoons in spring; yet though—especially in wet seasons—they certainly breed there, we have never discovered a nest. The marshmen (who know the different kinds of duck as well as most people) assert positively that in *very wet* springs a few pairs of the Common Teal also remain to breed.

Among the tall *juncales*, or reed-beds, in mid-water, abode numerous aquatic warblers—notably the Great Sedge-Warbler, Cetti's, and the Reed-Warbler, the loud grating song of the former is incessant: but owing to the depth of water and mud, and the maze of rank weeds, such spots are difficult to explore. The Melodious Warbler (*Hypolais polyglotta*) nests on bushes and sallows on the drier ground: while the little Fantails (*Cisticola*) build their pretty purse-shaped nests on the shorter rushes along the margin. A peculiarity of this tiny bird is that it lays eggs of wholly different colours—though not in the same nest—some clutches being pale

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Plate XXXII. MALLARDS AND FERRUGINOUS DUCKS—ALAMILLO. Page 268.

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green, some blue, others of a soft rose-colour, a few pure white. The elaborate way in which the nest itself is compacted of intertwined grasses and laced on to a tuft of rush is no less remarkable. Its Spanish name is *Bolsicon*—a little purse, and the species remains all the winter. Among the tall *carices*, floating in about three feet of water, was the nest of the Marsh-Harrier: it resembled that of a Coot, and had, perhaps, been built originally by that bird, many of which bred there.

While driving the ducks, five birds of peculiar appearance flew over—they were Glossy Ibis, and passed within shot of Felipe, who, however, failed to stop them. This was the only instance of our meeting with the Ibis—a singular circumstance, as in wet seasons they nest in numbers in the upper marisma. Their deep blue eggs have several times been brought to us while bustard-shooting on the Isla Menor, &c., the boys who brought them saying the nests were in the thick *cañas*, and not on low trees, where the small herons breed. Very curiously, in all the time we spent in the marisma, we never again saw this bird in spring, or found a single nest ourselves.

A ride of a few miles from Zopiton across the sandy heath-land brings us to the larger lagunas de Santolalla, where numerous wildfowl assemble in spring. Besides Mallards, Gadwalls, and Ferruginous Ducks, already described, were many Pintails, Garganeys, Teal, and the pretty Marbled Duck—(*Querquedula marmorata*). The latter nests at Santolalla at the end of May: but more numerously in the open marisma, laying ten or twelve eggs, well hidden among the clumps of samphire. Some of the Pintails (which are the most abundant of the winter wildfowl) linger late in spring: for on May 8th we observed a "bunch" of a dozen or so at Santolalla, all drakes, their snow-white throats glistening in the sunshine. Near them a pair of Shoveller drakes were swimming, and presently the binocular rested on six of the most extraordinary wildfowl we ever met with—gambolling and splashing about on the water, chasing each other, now above now beneath its surface like a school of porpoises,

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they appeared half birds, half water-tortoises, with which the lagoon abounds. We were well sheltered by a fringe of sedges, and presently the strangers entered a small reed-margined bight, swimming very deep, only their turtle-shaped backs and heavy heads in sight. Here we crept down on them, and as they sat, splashing and preening in the shallow water, stopped three—two dead, the third escaping, winged. They proved to be a duck and drake of the White-fronted Duck—*Erismatura mersa*—heavily built diving-ducks, round in the back, broad and flat in the chest, with small wings like a Grebe, and long, stiff tails like a Cormorant—the latter, being carried underwater as a rudder, is not visible when the bird is swimming. The enormously swollen bill of the drake—pale waxen blue in colour—completed as singular a picture of a feathered fowl as the writer ever came across: they were in fact no less remarkable in form and colour, now we had them in hand, than they had at first appeared in the water. The head and neck of the drake were jet black, with white face and cheeks: otherwise their whole plumage was dark ferruginous (not white below, as represented in "Bree") and with a silky, grebe-like sheen.

These singular ducks, we found, were well known to the *guardas* as "patos porrones" (porron—a knob), and subsequently found several pairs at the Laguna de Medina, a lake near Jerez, where, on the 23rd May, they were evidently breeding. The lake was also occupied by numbers of the Great Crested Grebe (*Podicipes cristatus*), quaint-looking birds in their full summer-dress. The nests of the Little Grebe may be found floating in every rushy pool.

The width of the lagoon would barely exceed half-a-mile; its shores all furrowed by wild boar in their search for *grillos*, or mole-crickets, and dotted with the skeletons of water-tortoises, and beyond its glancing waters rolled stretches of grey scrub and heath, backed in the distance by sand-dunes and corrales, the outliers of the desolate *arenales* that extend to the sea-coast. Beneath a straggling belt of pines there were sheltering from the mid-day heat a

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Plate XXXIII. WHITE-FRONTED DUCK (*ERISMATURA MERSA*)—Santolalla, May 8th, 1883. Page 270.

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group of wild-bred cattle; and a little apart stood three or four big bulls of the fighting breed:—formidable beasts that demand a wide berth. More shaggy cattle, knee-deep in water, were dreamily ruminating, each form surmounted by a white bird, the Buff-backed Heron—in Spanish *Agarrapatosa* or tick-eater—some apparently asleep, others busily searching for prey. Nearer still, among the islanded patches of sedge and carices, stalked a pair of Little Egrets, their long, thin necks arched with infinite grace, and heads poised to strike with deadly precision any darting larvæ or water-beetle they detect among the floating weeds.

The heron-tribe is strongly represented in Andalucia; in spring and summer almost every European form adorns these remote and marshy regions. During May the Buff-backed Herons were flying all over the plains in packs of a score to fifty or more, apparently in quest of a settlement; the pretty little Squacco Herons had then shifted their quarters from the marisma to the rushy lagoons, and many nests were ready for eggs in the *juncales;* but all this group breed late, none laying much before June.

Since we first visited these regions, now nearly twenty years ago, a sad diminution has taken place in the numbers of these beautiful Herons and Egrets, due in great measure to the cruel and thoughtless fashion of wearing their plumes in ladies' hats. Let ladies humanely remember that these plumes are only attained in the *nesting* season, when to kill the male means the sacrifice of a whole family. Fortunately there remain sequestered nooks, sacred as yet to wild nature. Both in the neighbourhood of Almonte and in certain marshy regions of vast cane-brake and wooded swamp on the Estremenian border, there survive unknown and unmolested colonies of these graceful creatures, where for many a year to come the Egrets, Buff-backed and Squacco Herons, the Night-Heron and Little Bittern, Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis and other "rare birds" may yet find a sanctuary protected by natural fastnesses, and by legions of leeches and mosquitoes that render

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human life well nigh intolerable. The very toads are there as big as small footstools; the natives yellow and sunken-eyed, with hollow cheeks and parchment skin.

Here, when summer-heats provoke miasma and fetid airs, languor-laden, from the morass, the herons con-

BUFF-BACKED HERON.

gregate. In June their slight nests crowd the sallow-brakes and clumps of gnarled alders and aspens islanded in marsh, and barricaded with bramble and vicious thorny *zarzas*. Amidst umbrageous gloom the Night-Heron and Bittern dream away the hours of daylight, the former among the branches, the latter in thickest sedge.

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The Bittern lays its pheasant-like eggs in April, often in March; the Little Bittern not till June. It is difficult to fix a date for the rest—so uncertain are they, and so dependent on the seasons and the quantity of water in the marismas. We have eggs of the Night-Heron taken as early as May 20th—another year none were laid till June 8th. From this latter date onwards is perhaps the average time for eggs of that species, as well as those of the Egret, Buff-back, and Squacco Herons, and the Little Bittern.

So retiring are the nocturnal species that it is difficult to flush them without a dog; yet they cannot compare, in this respect, with their neighbours, the Crakes and Rails, which also abound in the Spanish morass—the Water-Rail and Spotted Crake most numerous, Baillon's Crake rather less so, and the Little Crake the scarcest. All these are pointed and 'roded' keenly by native dogs, but their skulking powers are a match for the staunchest. *Mata-perros*—"kill-dogs"—is their Spanish nickname, their thin, curiously compressed bodies resembling in section that of one's hand held vertically, enabling them to glide like rats through the thickest growth of flags and aquatic herbage.

The nests of all the Rails are hard to find; but to identify the precise owner of each is a thousand-fold harder. Nests and eggs of all being closely alike, an *unidentified* clutch is worthless; but the man who can work this out knee-deep amidst mud and stagnant water, under a broiling sun, has patience that nothing can withstand, nor any obstacle resist.

During May a clamorous element is added to the bird-life of these lagoons by the nesting-colonies of Terns, which hover round the intruder, filling the air with their harsh vociferations. Santolalla is a stronghold of the Whiskered and Black Terns (*H. hybrida* and *H. fissipes*) whose nests are built on the water-lilies and floating water-weeds. There are other large colonies in the open marisma, where the Gull-billed and the Lesser Terns also nest, the former in some numbers.

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June in Spain is a month of intense heat—heat of that fiery high-dried sort that scorches as an open furnace. In June, as a Spanish proverb says—"Nothing but a dog or an Englishman" ventures out of doors; nor from an orni-

MARSH HARRIER—VERY OLD MALE.

thological point of view is there much inducement to do so. The teeming variety of bird-life which characterizes April and May is now conspicuously absent. Migration is sus-

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pended, and there is no movement of passage-birds. There is no longer the accustomed number of large hawks hunting the *campiña*, and even those birds which remain seem to keep out of sight, sheltering from the blazing heat.

Perhaps the most interesting birds at this season are the newly-fledged young of the Raptores. The young Imperial Eagles are of a beautiful tawny colour, and during the mid-day heat frequent the trees where they were hatched. We also obtained young Kites in the same way—very handsome birds, much ruddier than the old ones in April. The young of *M. migrans*, on the other hand, are less pleasing than their parents, being, in fact, a pale, rather "washed-out" reproduction of them. Towards the end of the month (June) the young Montagu's Harriers are on the wing; they have dark brown backs, each feather edged with chestnut, a white nape, and orange-tawny breast. Many of the young of the Marsh-Harrier are uniformly very dark, bronze-black, with rich orange crowns—strikingly handsome birds. Some have also patches of the latter colour on the scapulars, others on the breast—they vary greatly, no two are alike. This species is not easy to understand; one imagines that these very dark specimens are all young birds; that the old females are lighter brown with yellow heads, and that the very old males acquire half-blue wings and tail—I shot one of these latter with the whole head pure white, each feather streaked centrally with black. (*See* photo at p. 242.) But how is one to account for an individual—otherwise uniformly black—having a perfectly developed blue tail and secondaries?

During June we were surprised to find the Green Sandpiper tolerably numerous in the Coto Doñana. It was a very solitary species, a single bird frequenting almost each small pool or water-hole far out among the scrub. We at first imagined the females must be sitting, but all attempts to find the nests were of course futile. The Wood-Sandpiper was observed, on passage, in May.

As the long summer day draws to its close, the infinite

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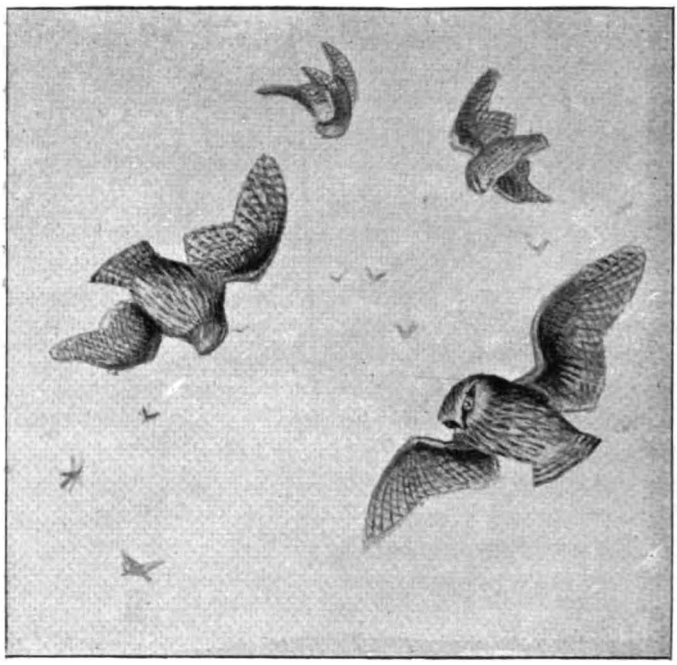
variety of nocturnal sounds which, during the short twilight, suddenly awake into being, strikes strangely on a northern ear. During the gloaming the air has been alive with the darting forms of bats, terns, and pratincoles, of swifts and swallows, all busily hawking after insects or slow-flying beetles. But before dark these disappear. Of crepuscular birds, the first to commence the nocturnal concert is the Russet-necked Nightjar, which abounds all



SUMMER 'EVENING—OWLS AND MOTHS.

over the scrub; a few minutes later, from the cork-trees, resounds the note of the Little Owl, then the sharp ringing *ki-yōū* of Scop's Owl—both in sight, flickering against the darkening sky; while far and near among the grass the loud rattle of the mole-cricket starts like an alarum and from every pool the united croaks of literally millions of frogs form, as it were, a background of sound resembling the distant roar of a mighty city.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SPANISH GYPSY.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE "GITANOS."

THE mysterious Rommany race which overruns every nation in Europe, but intermingles with none, has always abounded in Spain, and particularly in Andalucia, a land which is peculiarly favourable to the Ishmaelitish propensities of these human pariahs—as congenial to predatory wild men as to the wild beasts we elsewhere describe. Thoroughly typical objects both on the byeways and deserts of Spain, and of the animated scenes at her rural feasts and fairs, to which the gypsies flock like vultures to a carcase, it would be inappropriate here to omit all mention of this singular race, even though it may be impossible for us to add anything new to the exhaustive description of the Spanish gypsy narrated by Borrow in "The Zincali," a work based on intimate acquaintance with the gitanos and their language. To it we are indebted for much historic and ethnological information respecting the gypsy race, and take the liberty of quoting two or three passages from its pages.*

First appearing on Spanish soil during the early decades of the fifteenth century, after being driven from land to land, the Zingari outcasts speedily found a congenial home —if such a term is applicable to nomadic vagabonds— amidst the lone and sparsely-peopled regions of Iberia.

Whence they had originally come—whether from Egypt, as they themselves averred and as their Spanish name

* "The Zincali; or, an Account of the Gypsies of Spain." By George Borrow. 2 vols. London, John Murray, 1841.

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imports, or from India, as the term Zincali indicates—it is not our intention to inquire.* Suffice it that nearly five centuries ago, this invasion of tinkers, horse-thieves, sorcerers, and all-round rogues poured into Europe, and during the long period that has since elapsed have maintained themselves there—not, it is true, in luxury, rather in rags and apparent poverty—by means of robbery and deceit, at the expense of the various peoples upon whom, as a swarm of wasps or locusts, they have thought good to descend. All this time, too, they have maintained intact both their racial individuality, their peculiar language, and their inveterate habits of lying and thieving.

"Who are these gitanos?" querulously asks the learned Lorenzo Palminero more than three hundred years ago ("El Estudioso Cortesano," Alcalá, 1587). "Who are these Gitanos? I answer: these vile people first began to show themselves in Germany in the year 1417, where they call them Tartars, or Gentiles; in Italy they are termed Ciani. [In Spain the Arabs (Moors) knew the gypsies by only one name, *charami* = thieves.] They pretend that they come from Lower Egypt, and that they wander about as a penance, and to prove this they show letters from the King of Poland. They lie, however, for they do not lead the lives of penitents, but of dogs and thieves. A learned person [himself] in the year 1540 prevailed upon them, by dint of much persuasion, to show him the King's letter, and from it he gathered that the time of penance had already expired. He spoke to them in the Egyptian tongue. They said, however, as it was a long time since their departure from Egypt, they could no longer understand it. He then spoke to them in the vulgar Greek, such as is used at present in the Morea and Archipelago. Some understood it, others did not, so that as all did not understand it, we may conclude that the language

* Whatever may have been their origin, their language demonstrates that the Spanish gypsies are not (as has been suggested) relics of the expelled Moors, Arabs, or *Moriscos*, with whose tongue theirs has no affinity. Many of the Rommany words appear to be of Sanscrit derivation.

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they use is a feigned one, got up by thieves for the purpose of concealing their robberies, like the jargon of blind beggars."

From their earliest appearance in Spain the roving bands of the Rommany were found to be a public nuisance; but so rapidly grew the evil weed and took root in the soil, that by the middle of the fifteenth century the gypsies had established a rudely-organized system of violence, robbery and roguery from Biscay to the Mediterranean. The country roads were unsafe, infested with dark-skinned highwaymen; while rural districts were subjected to wholesale depredation, bands of these outcasts settling themselves in the adjacent hills, wastes, or forests, whence they plundered and virtually beleaguered the sparse and defenceless villages of all the country around. Once established amidst the sierras and wildernesses, it was no easy matter to dislodge them, or even to hold them in check. Spain has ever been a land of the *guerilla*—little war—and of the *guerillero;* and the gypsies, though by no means a warlike race, were not lacking in courage and in those qualities of hardihood and dash which constitute the most dangerous *guerilleros.* They possessed, moreover, the strength of union, an Ishmaelitish bond of brotherhood which held the outlaws together, while dividing them as by a great gulf from the peoples amidst whom they had come to dwell. They had also their secret language. Neither civil nor military power could make itself effective against "Will-o'-the-wisps," who are here to-day, gone to-morrow, whose homes were the forest-thicket and mountain-cave, who, with their fast and trusty horses and donkeys (their "stock-in-trade") could transport their whole tribe in dead of night to distant places with a speed almost equal to that of the wild beasts of the sierras, to whom they were so near akin.

The nominal employment of the gypsies was that of tinkers, workers in iron, and horse-traffickers: under which guise they really subsisted by cattle-lifting and horse-stealing, either by force, or fraud, according as

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circumstances might suggest. The female gypsies, or gitanas, more than doubled the ill-gotten gains of their husbands by the arts of sorcery and divination, by selling charms and love-philtres, stealing by legerdemain, and exercising the various branches of what are termed the "occult sciences"—in other words, practising upon the silly credulity of the weaker portion of humanity—as well as by other and more loathsome avocations. The credulity of their victims appears incredible, though it is hardly less marvellous than the tact and effrontery displayed by the gypsy women in their cozening and charlatan tricks. Their knowledge of human nature and how to reach its weak points, was remarkable in a race so low, so degraded, and wholly illiterate. They possessed the cunning and boldness of the wild beast, and combined with it a hatred of the "Busné," or Gentile, which the wild beast has not.

The bitterness of hatred which was cherished by the gitanos towards all of gentile race, appears incomprehensible, unless it springs from some old-time "first cause," the nature of which is long forgotten. Treacherous, cruel and vindictive, they had the wit to conceal their ill-will beneath soft words, and thus obtained means of committing atrocities against the "gentile," the records of which make one shudder.

Amongst the various devices employed by the gitanos to plunder their victims, may be mentioned the following:—

Hokkano Baro.—The great trick, or swindle, varying from the "confidence trick" in its multifarious forms, up to the boldest and most barefaced deceptions, often on a grand scale.

La Baji, or, in Spanish, *buena ventura.*—Fortune-telling, by chiromancy, necromancy, and other divinations.

Ustilar Pastelas.—Stealing by legerdemain or sleight of hand.

Querelar Nasela.—The evil eye.

Drao = poison.—Both these latter devices were employed to produce epidemics among men or flocks, when the reputed medical or veterinary skill of the gitanos was

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called into requisition; and, being aware of the origin of the disease, they seldom failed to effect its cure.

The gitanos were, and are divided into two classes: one section have more or less settled colonies in the Spanish towns and cities, where they dwell in quarters apart from the natives, known as *gitanerias*, wherein they ply their trade of tinkers, horse-dealers and shearers, sorcerers, and general thieves; and from whence, in pursuance of their inveterate vagabondism, they sally forth from time to time to attend distant fairs and markets to dispose of their stolen goods; and, as occasion arises, to perpetrate fresh crimes. The other section is more exclusively nomadic, roaming at large over the wilds of Spain, having no home save the shelter of forest or sierra, and to some extent actually migratory.

The daily life of the Spanish gypsy has always been characterized by a squalor and degradation exceeding that of the residuum of any European nation. They appear to have been devoid of the faintest conception of religion beyond that undefined sense of superstition which is common to savage races all over the world, or to possess any sense of morality, decency, or self-respect. Their food was of the foulest—they shrank not from carrion, and have been accused, apparently not without reason, of cannibalism, for which in early days many a gitano swung from the gibbet. Male and female alike, they were adepts at devilry and crime of every degree, yet amidst such a category of evil, they still possessed the one singular virtue of esteeming purity in their women. We quote the following picture of life in a gitanería from Borrow ("Zincali," i., p. 76 *et seq.*):—"The gitanerías at even-fall were frequently resorted to by individuals widely differing in station from the inmates of these places—we allude to the young and dissolute nobility and hidalgos of Spain. The gypsy women and girls were the principal attraction to these visitors. Wild and singular as these females are in their appearance, there can be no doubt, for the fact has been frequently proved, that they are capable of exciting passions of the most ardent kind, particularly in

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the bosoms of those who are not of their race, which passion of course becomes the more violent when the almost utter impossibility of gratifying it is known. No females in the world can be more licentious in word or gesture, in dance and song, than the gitanas, but there they stop; and so of old, if their titled visitors presumed to seek for more, an unsheathed dagger or gleaming knife speedily repulsed those who expected that the gift most dear among the sect of the Roma was within the reach of a Busné.

"Such visitors, however, were always encouraged to a certain point, and by this and various other means the gitanos acquired connections which frequently stood them in good stead in the hour of need. What availed it to the honest labourers of the neighbourhood, or the citizens of the town to make complaints to the *Corregidor* respecting thefts and frauds committed by the gitanos when perhaps the sons of that very Corregidor frequented the nightly dances at the gitanería, and were deeply enamoured of some of the dark-eyed singing girls? What availed complaints when perhaps a gypsy sybil, the mother of those very girls, had free admission to the house of the Corregidor at all times and seasons, and spa'ed the *buena ventura* of his daughters, promising them counts and dukes, or Andalucian knights in marriage, or prepared philtres for his lady by which she was always to reign supreme in the affections of her husband? And above all, what availed it to the plundered to complain that his mule or horse had been stolen when the gitano robber, perhaps the husband of the sybil and the father of the black-eyed Gitanillas, was at that moment actually in treaty with my lord the Corregidor himself, to supply him with some splendid, thick-maned, long-tailed steed at a small price, to be obtained, as the reader may well suppose, by an infraction of the laws? The favour and protection which the gitanos experienced from persons of high rank is alluded to in the Spanish laws, and can only be accounted for by the motives above detailed."

By the middle of the fifteenth century the bands of the

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Rommany had become a serious danger in rural Spain, and their ability to act daringly in concert was demonstrated by their attempt to massacre the whole populace and sack the town of Logroño. That town at the moment was stricken down by a pestilence, which it was more than suspected had been caused by the Zincales themselves having poisoned with their *drao* the springs whence Logroño was supplied with water. Already, before the gypsy assault, the greater part of the populace had perished of the disease, and the annihilation of the survivors was only averted by the singular foresight and energy of one man—Francisco Alvarez. This Alvarez in his early life was said to have been admitted to the community of a gitano tribe, to have married a daughter of its chief, and eventually to have become the chief himself. Around the details of the affair hangs some uncertainty; but the historic fact that the gitanos actually attempted the massacre and plunder of a considerable Spanish town has been well attested, among others by Francisco de Córdova on his "Didascalia" (Lugduni, 1615).

The beginning of the seventeenth century saw the evil still on the increase, despite repressive measures. Bands of these human fiends, many hundreds strong, roamed over the highlands of Castile and Arragon, and were only dispersed, after plundering and devastating the country, when sufficient military force had at length been collected. The gypsies speedily searched out the richest provinces of the land—New Castile, La Mancha, Estremadura, Murcia, Valencia and Andalucia, and troubled but little the poor, wild, mountain-regions of the Asturias, Galicia, and the hill-country of Biscay.

The impunity with which these people set at nought during hundreds of years the successive laws which were enacted for their repression, is a curious point in connection with their history. As early as 1499, Ferdinand and Isabella, at Medina del Campo, interdicted, under heavy penalties, their vagrant propensities; ordered them to find fixed occupations, and to settle in the different towns and villages within a short specified period. In default they

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were to be expelled from Spanish soil. This act was confirmed and supplemented with more vigorous penalties by Charles I. at Toledo in 1539, and again by Philip II. in 1586, at Madrid.

By an enactment of Philip IV. at Madrid, 1633, the former laws were confirmed, but in order still further to penalize the profession and race of gypsies, their dress, their language, and even the name of *gitanos*, were declared illegal, and suppressed under pain of servitude in the galleys, or banishment. The gypsies were forbidden to form colonies or tribes, to intermarry, or to trade at markets and fairs; while the local authorities were commissioned to "hunt them down, take and deliver them," even beyond the boundaries of their respective jurisdictions. Still further legal fulminations against the gypsies were promulgated by Charles II. in 1692 and 1695, but all alike proved futile.

Similarly Philip V., in 1726, again increased the penalties on *gitanismo*, banishing the sect from Madrid and other royal cities, and in 1745, by a yet fiercer edict, he directed that they were to be "hunted down with fire and sword; that even the sanctity of the temples was to be invaded in their pursuit, and the gitanos dragged from the horns of the altar, should they flee thither for refuge."

Such, during three centuries (1499–1783), was the set policy of Spain towards her gypsy population. They were a proscribed race, treated as aliens and outlaws, forbidden to intermarry, and their very name, dress, and language were interdicted under severe penalties. Yet in spite of it all the gypsies continued to flourish, to increase in numbers, and to ply their customary trades of thieving, sorcery, and the rest, without the slightest check.

Whether under any circumstances these repressive measures were or were not the means best calculated to attain the object in view, it is at least certain that their failure was assured beforehand by the negligent way in which they were put in force; or rather by the fact they were never put in force at all. The gypsies, and especially the females, as we have already mentioned,

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by virtue of their divinations and certain other services which they rendered to the upper and ruling classes of Spain, had secured friends, or at least neutrals, amongst the very people in whose hands lay the administration of the laws. They were thus able to annul, and even to ridicule, the successive legal enactments formulated to exterminate them.

Among the various reasons for the remarkable vitality of the Rommany sect in thus surviving centuries of oppression, there stand out prominently the strong tribal cohesion *inter se* of the Zincali: their marriage customs and the aversion with which they regarded any alliance with the Busné, or Gentile. A gitano might, in rare instances, marry a Spanish female, but in no case did a gitana consent to take a husband outside her own race. Thus the *errate*—the "black blood" of the Rommany, on which above all they prided themselves, was preserved uncontaminated. Whether, had the repressive laws been vigorously carried out, they would have met with better results, is an open question.

At length, in 1783, a fresh departure in policy was inaugurated by Charles III., or perhaps it would be safer to say, during the reign of that monarch, for he was more of a Nimrod than a statesman, and appears to have occupied himself with grand *batidas* for stags, wild boars, and other game, rather than with the welfare of his people, and this at the very time when the magnificent colonial empire of Spain was gradually slipping from his grasp. Whoever it may have been that inspired the new gypsy law of 1783, its author at least recognized the failure of the penal decrees of the three preceding centuries, and instituted in their place a more humane method of dealing with the nomads.

Under the new law the gypsies were, in the first place, declared "not to be so by nature or origin, nor to proceed from an infected root." It was enacted that to such of them as should abandon their distinctive mode of life, dress, and language, the whole share of offices, employments, trades and occupations, should be open equally

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with other Spanish subjects. The whole range of trade, art, science, and the professions, were thrown open to such of the gitanos as should abjure their former vagabond life with all its evil associations; and penalties were imposed on any who should attempt to molest them or to oppose their entry within the pale of civilized life.

Finally, the law was declared to be equal as between a reclaimed gypsy and any other "vassal" of Spain: but a death-penalty was prescribed against such of the nomad race as declined this invitation to embrace an honest life, and who continued their former habits.

The effect of this measure is marked, though the gitano survives. Fifty years of equal rights accomplished in this case what centuries of oppression had failed to achieve. Gitanismo is certainly not extinguished, but it was modified and brought more or less under control. The numbers of the gitanos have ever since decreased: they are slowly relinquishing their vagrant habits, and live more in cities and towns, and less in the mountains and fields. Ages, probably, would be required wholly to eradicate the inveterate criminality practised from birth by the Rommany race since unknown times—if, indeed, its entire eradication is possible. But certainly the humane measure of Charles III. during the lifetime of a man produced more tangible results than the persecution of preceding centuries.

The gitano caste in Spain were at one time estimated at 60,000. Fifty years ago, after half a century of equal laws, their numbers had fallen to 40,000, of which one-third were inhabitants of Andalucia; while at the present day, even that total might probably be reduced by one-half.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPANISH GYPSY OF TO-DAY.

HITHERTO we have dealt with the subject of the Spanish gypsy in a past tense and from an historic point of view. It remains to add that the Rommany sect, though decreasing in numbers and largely divested of their former dangerous character, continues plentiful enough throughout Spain, and especially in the southern provinces, their best known colonies being at the Triana suburb of Seville, and in the rock-caves of the Alpujarras at Granada, where certain tribes form one of the "stock sights" familiar to travellers in Southern Spain. Though the later laws have checked their vagabondism, yet the instinct of Ishmael survives, and, especially in the summer-time, the gypsies wander over the Andalucian *vegas* and flock to rural fairs, where the men drive their ancient trade of dealing in horses—mostly stolen, and all "faked" and got-up for sale, though in these matters the gypsies are perhaps no worse than their gentile rivals.

At the fairs the wealthier gypsies also trade in precious stones and jewellery; the poorer in hardware, "tinkery," and the like. The *gitanas*, gaudily arrayed in colours of startling hues, and blazing with heavy golden ornaments, deal in divinations and tell the *buena ventura* as of old, the younger girls ever ready to engage in their lissom dances and in the wild suggestive singing characteristic of the Rommany race.

In towns and cities some of the gypsy women have a large and varied *clientèle:* they are admitted to the best houses, and the proudest señoras deign to inspect the ancient lace, the bric-à-brac and jewellery that they bring

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for sale. Of antique lace, elaborately wrought, and of painted fans and such-like relics, the supply in Spain seems inexhaustible: and eventually the glib tongue of the gitana may probably obtain about half the price originally asked.

Despite certain changes — hereafter described — the Spanish gypsy remains exotic to Hispania, distinct in type both of form and feature; the restless, suspicious eye of the hunted animal, the lithe build, and straight supple limbs, even among the *svelte* and graceful Andalucians, still distinguish these swarthy sons of the wilderness.* The true-bred gypsy remains a distinct species. Though amenable to the same laws, and recognized as a Spanish subject, he is distinguishable at a glance. The youths undergo their allotted period of army service, but remain not an hour beyond the stipulated time with the colours.

Their normal occupations to-day are chiefly those of butchers—all the shambles of Spain are in their hands—tinkers, horse-breakers, mule and donkey-dealers, and basket-makers. But, at a pinch, the gitano now condescends to engage on the lighter work of the land—hoeing, weeding, &c. Like the Jew, the gypsy has ever hitherto been conspicuous by his absence from every field of manual labour: both prefer the lighter barters of life; and that the gitano should now—even casually—take to such honest work, is perhaps a sign of the times.

One great change has, however, been wrought by the century of equal laws—a change perhaps of vital import to the villain crew. The once sacred *errate* is contaminated. Marriages between the two races—with or without the sanction of the church—are now frequent, though the Spaniard who contracts such ill-savoured union loses caste among his or her own people, and the children of these mixed marriages never lose the taint.

By this means there has sprung into existence, during late years, an intermediate class, neither pure Gitano nor

* In speed of foot, the gitano lads carry off the palm, leaving all competitors behind in the rare athletic contests which have taken place in Southern Spain.

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Plate XXXIV. DANCERS AT GRANADA—THE *BOLERO*. Page 289.

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Spanish, which is daily increasing, and, being free from all the traditionary observances of the gypsy, mingles more and more with the national life, carrying with it much of the ready wit and piquancy of the latter.

The result of this grafting of an element of gitanismo upon the original Castilian stock is the *Flamenco* of to-day, and it is a curious satire on Spanish society that the style and attire, even the language, of this wanton half-caste breed have become a fashionable craze—have been by some paradoxical freak adopted by a section of even the higher Madrilenian circles who revel in copying the garb, the manners, and the jargon of the once loathed gypsy. Flamencos are found in every grade—well known among the gilded youth of Madrid or Seville—but the bull-ring appears to provide the most approved models for this school. Nor is the mania confined to the men: the bright gala-dress of the gitana has become fashionable among high-placed señoras who appear at dance or salon sporting the gaudy Manila shawl with its flowing fringe, short frock, and with hair coiffeured *á la Flamenca*. To prefer the raciest and most highly-flavoured Spanish dishes, to quaff freely the Manzanilla, to smoke cigarettes, to prefer olives to bon-bons, to know the bull-fighters by their pet names, to be loud if not witty, smart in repartee and slang—this is to be *Flamenca*.

Both sexes of the Flamencos proper retain the dress and manner of the original gypsy. The brazen beauty of the young Flamencas has the same seductive charms for the *Busné;* and it is from the half-caste that the dancing girls of the cities and light-fingered gentry of many accomplishments are mostly recruited.

A considerable admixture of gypsy-blood is found among the lower strata of the bull-fighting profession, though its higher ranks are comparatively free from it. His intensely superstitious nature unfits the true-bred gypsy from real success in this or any pursuit where nerve and decision are required. The only gitano *espadas* of note are Chicorro and El Gallo. The former has latterly lost nerve and prestige through a curious practical joke

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played upon his superstitious nature by a ventriloquial member of his *cuadrilla*. As he stood, sword and *muleta* in hand, facing a black bull of the Duke of Veragua's breed in the Plaza of Madrid, suddenly the beast addressed him in low sepulchral tones, "*Te voy á coger!*"—I am going to catch you! Such was the effect on Chicorro's nerves

GYPSY LAD.

that his life was only saved by his attendant *chulos*, who drew off the brute's attack, nor has Chicorro ever since dared to face a *black* bull.

The resident Spanish gypsies cluster together in some separate quarter of the town, or form an isolated mud-built *barrio* outside its walls. Dwelling apart, and

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without the slightest bond of sympathy with their Castilian neighbours, their outward signs of joy or grief—both demonstrative—pass unheard and ignored. In their religion—adopted perforce of law, as before set forth, and which savours of idolatry simple, with a dash of superstition and fanaticism—in their curious marriage and funereal customs—both occasions of noisy orgy, the latter resembling an Irish "wake" with its alternations of wailing by the hour "to order," and feasting in turn—the gypsies are left severely alone. There is no sympathy with them. On the other hand, when civil or political disturbances prevail, and southern fervour is all ablaze, the gypsy *barrio* remains spectacular and unmoved.

No "patriotic" dreams or soaring ambitions disturb the gypsy's squalid life—what has he to gain? What can he ever hope to be, but the despised and rejected, under any form of government? No list of misguided peasantry, beguiled and betrayed by base agitator, ever registers his name: the midnight meetings of the "Black Hand" find no gitano present at their sworn and secret conclaves. The vagabond is too shrewd uselessly to embroil himself in abortive efforts to upset existing order: though there is little doubt what his action would be should the opportunity of pillage with impunity ever present itself.

Los Bohemios.—There remain to be noticed the bands of nomad gypsies who flock to Spain during the winter months, but whose true home is said to be in Bohemia. These are not in touch with the native tribes, speaking but few words of Spanish or of its gypsy jargon. In summer they infest the roads and by-ways of Austria, travelling southwards, as winter advances, thus resembling in habit their British congeners. Their type of feature is of more Eastern caste, their faces almost black, with long tangled hair, in both sexes, hanging down to the shoulders. Their home is the wigwam or rickety waggon with its load of rags and babies, and its mixed team of mules, donkeys, and ponies. The lurcher-dog and the snare assist these Zingali to fill their *puchero*. They traverse the wilds of Spain in camps of thirty to fifty, squatting near village or

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outside city walls, ostensibly to occupy themselves with iron and copper tinkery, kettle-making, and the like. Some of the women of these Bohemians are striking enough in their gypsy-beauty; the same faces are seen in successive years, so their journeyings are to some extent methodical.

One meets these nomad bands all over rural Spain, laboriously "trekking" axle-deep, across dusky-brown plain or lonely waste of brushwood and palmetto—picturesque objects—indeed the only element of life and colour amidst these desolate scenes.

GYPSY DANCE.

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CHAPTER XXV.

IN SEARCH OF THE LAMMERGEYER.

A WINTER RIDE IN THE SIERRAS.

To the Lammergeyer tradition has assigned some romantic attributes, and a character of wondrous dash and daring. This is the bird that is credited with feats of hurling hunters from perilous positions down crag or crevass, carrying off children to its eyrie, and kidnapping unguarded babes. Even Dr. Bree, in his "Birds of Europe," while doubting that it habitually assails grown-up people, gravely asserts that a pair of these birds will not hesitate to attack a man whom they have caught at a disadvantage; while one will venture, single-handed, an onslaught on two hunters who are asleep. Some naturalists now seem inclined to go to the other extreme, and to regard the Lammergeyer as merely a huge Neophron.

No doubt the great size and weird, dragon-like appearance of the Gypaëtus have tended to promote exaggeration, while its rarity and remote haunts have made it no easy subject to study, and few have formed its acquaintance in its own almost inaccessible domains. Our small experiences, narrated in the two following chapters, seem to show that the truth lies between the two extremes.

Towards the end of January we set out for a fortnight's exploration of the mountains beyond Tempul and Algar, a forty-mile ride to the eastward of Jerez. Bitter was the cold as we rode off in the darkness at 5 A.M., only two stars shining in the eastern firmament; truly the word *recréo*, as Blas explained to the sentry on duty at the old Moorish gateway, that we were only bound on *pleasure*,

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sounded almost satirical—as some one has said, life would be endurable but for its pleasures. By dawn we were crossing the hungry gravel-ridges beyond Cuartillos, and watched the sun rise from behind the stony pile of San Christobal, bathing the distant mountains, whither we were bound, in glorious golden glow.

Crossing the Guadalete by the ford of Barca Florida, our route led through leagues of lovely park-like land —here straggling natural woods or ferny glades, anon opening out upon stretches of heath and palmetto. The track, where one existed, a typical Spanish by-way, shut in between vertical banks of slippery white marl, that barely left room for the laden mule; its narrow bed was a turgid mud-hole, honeycombed with the footprints of beasts that had gone before. Where the heath was more open we could take an independent course; but the scrub, as a rule, was impenetrable, and left no alternative but to go on plunging through the clinging mud. At noon we outspanned for *almuerzo* beneath a cork-oak, the weather and the scene alike lovely beyond words. The evergreen woods swarmed with life; over the green expanse of palmetto hovered hen-harriers: a pair of kites swept over the wooded slopes of Berlanger, grey shrikes sat perched on dead boughs; chats, larks, buntings, and goldfinches swarmed, and all the usual Spanish birds, to wit, bustards great and small, cranes, storks, peewits, red-legs, kestrels, &c., were observed during the day's ride.

Later in the afternoon we were fairly among the outspurs of the sierra, and overhead, on heavy wing, soared the vultures. What a curious commentary on the state of a country are such hordes of huge carrion-feeders, and how eloquently does their presence attest a backward and listless condition in the lands they inhabit! In Spain, it is true, vultures serve a useful office as scavengers; yet in modern Europe they surely seem an anachronism. No doubt it is due as much to the physical conditions, to the desert character and semi-tropical climate of this wild land, as to the apathy of the Spanish people, that they exist in such numbers. Among nations more keenly im-

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bued with commercial instincts, the flock-master takes care that his stock shall support themselves in order to support him. The daily, hourly losses which are implied in the supplementary support of hordes of huge flesh-eating birds, each as heavy as a Spanish sheep and voracious as a hyena, would simply put him out of the market, and eventually land him in bankruptcy. But Spain cares nothing for modern ideas, and disdains to put herself about in the universal race for wealth. There is dignity in her attitude, but there is at least a suspicion

LAMMERGEYER—A FIRST IMPRESSION.

of lassitude. Where Nature is prodigal, man becomes proportionately apathetic. Here her gifts more than suffice for simple tastes and day-to-day requirements, and the rural Andaluz seeks no more.

In agriculture, stock-raising, and other pastoral pursuits, the rudiments of modern system—drainage, irrigation, and the like—are ignored. In the burning heats of summer, when every green thing is scorched to death, the cattle die by hundreds from thirst and want of pasturage;

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in winter, when plains are flooded, and valleys water-logged, the death-rate from cold, want, and disease is hardly less heavy than that of summer. Small wonder the great bare-necked scavengers of Nature increase and flourish.

Passing beneath the twin crags of Las Dos Hermanas, we struck the course of the Majaceite, whose rushing stream, embowered amidst magnificent oleanders, looked more *like trout* than anything we had then seen in these sierras. Among the mountain streams above Alcalá de los Gazules and in the Sierra de la Jarda we have observed its darting form, and further south some large trout have more recently been captured.

It was necessary to ford the Majaceite, which, in its swollen state and opaque current, was one of those things that bring one's heart into one's mouth; the bottom, however, proved sound: we plunged through all right, and after some stiffish mountain-riding reached the *pueblocito* of Algar just as the setting sun was bathing the wild serrania in softest purples and gold.

The posada was a typical Spanish village inn. Our horses we had ourselves to see quartered in the stable, which occupied one side of the courtyard, while our dinner was being made ready in a small whitewashed room adjoining. The sleeping-quarters above consisted of a single small attic, absolutely devoid of furniture or of contents beyond a pile of sacks containing corn, or "paja" (chaff), in one corner, and our own belongings, including saddles, mule-pack, &c., &c., which lay littered all over the floor. Three trestle-beds ("catres") were produced, and in deference to the idiosyncrasies of the *extranjero*, a tiny wash-basin was placed on the window-sill—not that there was any *window*, beyond a folding wooden shutter. Dinner consisted of an *olla*, in which small morsels of pork could be hunted up amidst the recesses of a steaming mass of *garbanzos* (chick-pea), by no means bad, though we were too hungry to be fastidious.

A small crowd of idlers, as usual, hung about the open courtyard of the posada, watching for "any new thing,"

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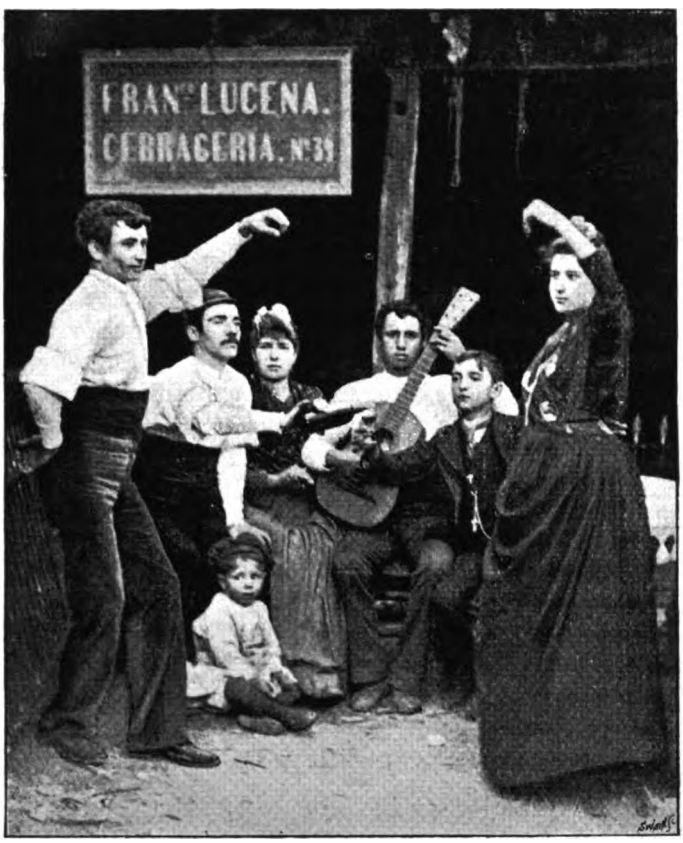
and speculating on our objects in coming. I overheard the word *minerál*, and remembering that I had been amusing myself in sifting some of the sands of the Majaceite, thought it best to dispel any false impressions by inviting the



DANCE AND GUITAR.

bystanders to share a *boracha* of the rough wine of local growth, and the usual cigarette. It is always best to have some definite object, so I told my guests that I had come to the sierra to shoot the *quebranta-huesos*, literally, "bone-smasher." They stared and mumbled over the

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name; had never heard of such a thing; the first man one meets probably never has; but there was in the village a goatherd, *muy inteligente en pajaros*, "who knew all about birds." I sent for this worthy, Francisco Garcia de Conde by name, a light-built, wiry mountaineer. Francisco's ornithological repute was easily acquired, for among the blind a one-eyed man is king; but he certainly did know the Lammergeyer, and his description of its habits and appearance passed the evening away pleasantly enough. The *quebranta-huesos* he described as a fierce and solitary bird—never seen more than two together, and discriminated it from the vultures as being *muy dañino*—very destructive to goats, kids, and other hill-stock, which it seizes and kills on the spot, or hurls over the ledge of some precipice. He well described their habit of engaging in aërial combat—"siempre se ponen peleando en el ayre"—and their loud wild "pwing! pwing!" resounding through the mountain solitudes. Of their actual nesting-places, however (which I was most anxious to discover), he knew nothing, beyond positively stating (and in this he was corroborated by other hillmen) that they bred exclusively in the loftier sierras beyond Ronda. We had ourselves spent some time traversing those very sierras without seeing anything of this bird; but should add, were not at that time specially in search of it. Their eyries, Francisco asserted, were only to be found in the region of "living rocks" (*piedras vivas*), which form the loftiest peaks. In this, however, as will appear in the next chapter, our friend Francisco was mistaken.

Our conversation was listened to—I don't imagine enjoyed—by a pair of lovers, who, with a rather pretty girl, the daughter of the house, presumably in the capacity of duena, occupied the other side of the table. The *enamorados* scarcely ever spoke; he sat looking mutely into her face, only muttering a whisper at long intervals. She was absolutely silent, and looked stolid and stupid too.

Leaving Algar, we crossed the bleak plateaux to the eastward, brown, stony, and sterile; thence descending to

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a forest region, where the track followed the course of a clear mountain stream, embedded among oleander, laurestinus, and myrtle, their foliage forming an evergreen tunnel, along which we rode in grateful shade. For some distance our route and the burn ran parallel, their courses sometimes coincident; then we diverged to the left, ascending the slope of a *garganta*, amidst noble oaks, chestnuts, and ilex, all, save the oaks, in full leaf, and from the gnarled trunks hung hare's-foot ferns and masses of ivy and parasitic plants in green festoons. Of bird-life, but little beyond a few common small birds was observable, and on a sunny slope we came suddenly on a big grey mongoose, which, however, got to ground before the gun could be unslung.

The first range explored was the series of crags terminating the Sierra de las Cabras; but it proved blank as regarded our chief object. The summit is a long, narrow, knife-edged ridge, along which vertical strata of limestone, bleached white as marble, protrude abruptly as the walls of a ruined city. Amidst these ruinous streets were a few Black Chats, and on a shoulder of the hill a solitary Blue Rock-Thrush; a small eagle was sweeping over the slopes, but not a sign of the Lammergeyer could we see. The day was bright and clear, and the view extensive and wild. On the north the granite mass of San Christobal, now lightly flecked with snow, limited our horizon; but in other directions rose an infinity of grey, stony sierras, range beyond range, some sharp, jagged, and cruelly bare of vegetation. To the south we could discern the silvery sheen of the Lagunas de Janda, with glimpses of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the misty outline of African highlands beyond.

We had a long, hard day ere we reached the cortijo of a hospitable hill-farmer among the cork-woods of the valley beyond. Here we sought a night's lodging, and the kindly mountaineer, "Francisco de Naranjo, su servidor de usted," as with a low bow and typical Andalucian courtesy he introduced himself, at once made us feel that the Spanish welcome—"aqui tiene usted su casa"—was, in

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his case, no empty form of words. We dined together, Francisco and I, on garbanzos, thrushes, a chicken, and black puddings! These last, and the consciousness that a newly-killed pig, whose life-blood no doubt had furnished the delicacy, hung from the rafters immediately behind my head, amidst store of algarrobas, capsicums, and heads of golden maize, were the only drawbacks to my comfort. We discussed agricultural and political subjects, and agreed in sharing conservative views, though, in Spain, I fancy I might turn rather more of a reformer; but this I did not hint at. Francisco observed that should Lord Salisbury's then existing Government in England fall, it would be a *mal rato* (a bad time) for property-owners everywhere! My host told me that he set his watch by the sun, and in answer to a question when the sun would rise to-morrow, promptly replied, "At 7.19."*

After dinner we adjourned to the large outer room, where among the miscellaneous crew gathered round the blazing logs were a wild-honey hunter, and a birdcatcher who was plying his vocation in the adjacent woods. I was surprised to find among his captures a number of redwings; of a couple of dozen thrushes which I bought for my own and men's eating, no less than eight were redwings, and on subsequent days he caught many more. This man, though he knew that the song-thrushes were migratory in Spain, saying they were *pajaros de entrada*, which left when the swallows appeared, did not see any difference between them and the redwings. He had also caught a Great Spotted Woodpecker, and while I was examining it, one of the half-wild cats of the farm, cautiously stalking beneath my chair, seized the prey and made off into outer darkness.

It was a typical Andalucian scene around the hearth, the group of bronzed leather-clad mountaineers, some already "gone to roost" (audibly) on the low mud settee round the outer wall, while others rolled the everlasting

* These particulars are, however, given in nearly all Spanish diaries and almanacs.

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"papelito," and one, as usual, "touched" the guitar. My host had a narrow "catre" set up for me in his own room, and next morning, after an early cup of the delicious thick Spanish chocolate and the sweet biscuits for which the neighbouring village of Alcalá bears a local repute, we started on foot to ascend the range behind the house while yet the hills were wrapped in mist-wreaths.

The ascent at first lay through hanging forests, broken here and there by grey crags, the home of the chough and the eagle-owl. Here a cushat occasionally dashed away, or a jay awoke the echoes at safe distance. Above the trees the climb became harder and the ground of the roughest, stony acclivities choked with brushwood. Beyond these came the region of rock, vast monoliths and rock walls beside which a man felt a very mite in the scale of creation.

On the conical rock-pile, the Picacho del Aljibe, which towers over the surrounding sierras not unlike a gigantic Arthur's Seat over the Salisbury Crags, we had enjoyed in a former year a sight of the Gypaëtus; but now it proved blank, nor could our guides, nor a goatherd we met on the mountain, give us any information beyond the customary "hay muchos en Estremadura." Whatever one may seek, it would appear, abounds in Estremadura! The Spanish peasant, whether from an over-anxious desire to assist, or from a fear of appearing ignorant, is apt to err on the side of imagination or exaggeration. Information received from them needs careful sifting, or disappointment may ensue. Thus, while on a fishing expedition in the north of Spain, I was sounding my companion, a Gallegan peasant, as to the bears, deer, and other game of the surrounding sierras. At first his answers seemed straight and fair, but a bear story or two took me aback, and presently he insisted that the *red* deer in those hills *never cast their horns*, which grew to a fabulous size. Before abandoning the discussion I said casually—with a view to "fix" him—"*Y leones?*" "Lions! No, señor, here there are none; but further over yonder (this with a wave of his hand to the westward) there are many." The expression, *mas allá*

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hay muchos, and the gesture that accompanied it, conveyed the impression that only a few leagues across the mountains, there were swarms of lions: but on being questioned more precisely as to the locality, he replied—"In the United States!" Possibly in that lad's mind, the *Estados Unidos* commenced somewhere just beyond the limit of his view—at any rate, further zoological discussion was suspended.

Many of the crags were tenanted by vultures, but these we expressly avoided, and directed the search to spots where these birds were not. For some days we sought in vain: at last we espied an eyrie which appeared to give promise of success. This was a wide crevice in the face of a precipice, which from the copious whitewash below, was evidently occupied. Some broken crags on the left seemed to afford a chance of climbing within shot of the eyrie; and having reached the spot, Blas fired a shot below, when there followed a scrambling noise within the cave, and out swept—not the coveted Gypaëtus, but a huge bare-necked griffon. I appeased my disappointment with both barrels, and the B.B. taking effect on the head, the vulture collapsed and fell down—down—with a mighty thud to the slopes below.

We could find nothing but vultures here: every crag was possessed by them, and we examined several of their abodes. They were already beginning to build: the remnants of last year's structures being now (January 22nd) supplemented by fresh live branches of oak and olive, and big claws-full of grass torn up by the roots.

'Twere a long tale to tell of fruitless efforts: we never so much as saw our coveted prize hereabouts, and at length we left the kindly farmer's house. The pretty Anita who had waited on us, and who, though she never sat down in her master's presence, joined freely in the conversation, had, we observed, donned quite an extra stratum of *poudre d'amour*, or some such compound, upon her fair brown cheeks to bid *adios* to the mad Inglés; but neither she nor hearty Francisco would hear of accepting any return for all the trouble of our visit. We had an idea, in the former case, that coquetry might have had something to do with

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Anita's refusal, but time forbade the solution of the question.

GRIFFON VULTURE. (A sketch in the Sierra.)

Further explorations had no better result: in the forests of the Sierra de la Jarda were a good many roe and some

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pig, but we did not care to risk the uncertainty of a *batida* all alone. Partridge are very scarce on all these hills, and no wonder, since every farmer keeps his pair of call-birds (*reclamos*). We had gently hinted to Francisco the unwisdom of shooting partridges to decoys in spring; but he insisted it did no harm, since *he only shot the cocks!* A pair or two of partridges at long intervals were all we saw (two or three brace a day was the utmost we could bag as a rule), and these, with a few hares and a chance rabbit, are all the small game of the sierra. In the marshy valleys were flights of peewits (January), and the woods swarmed with thrushes, blackbirds, chaffinches, green and brown linnets, robins, a few redwings, and other common species. A striking bird among the dense scrub on the hillsides was the little Dartford warbler, a creature of such intensely tame and skulking habits, that it was impossible to get a shot beyond a few yards—which involved annihilation of so tiny an atom.

After another week's exploration, sleeping at the *chozas* of goatherds, or in bat-haunted caves, and enduring much discomfort, we decided to give it up.* On the homeward journey we gave a day to the exploration of the Boca de la Foz, where on a former occasion we had had a shot at a Lammergeyer—a grey-brown immature bird; but here again we met with nothing but the ubiquitous vultures, and in the afternoon we had paid off our guides and were starting on the homeward ride, when Benitez pointed out a *pajaraco* in the distance. At first the bird appeared an ordinary griffon, some of which were close by; but as it came overhead, there was no mistaking the outlines of the Lammergeyer. Slowly the magnificent bird wheeled and sailed overhead, and our eyes feasted on the object we would have given two little fingers to possess. For some minutes he treated

* We do not encumber ourselves on these bird-hunting expeditions with tents, tressle-beds, indiarubber baths, and the other luxuries of the regular shooting campaigns. Sometimes, after sleeping in the *cerrones*, if no water was near, one's toilet was confined to a general "shake up," like a fox-terrier turning out from his mat, and we rode on till a hill-burn afforded a chance of a bath and breakfast.

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us to a fine view at moderately short distance. The general contour and flight was far more vulturine and less falcon-like than we had expected. The wings seemed fully as heavy, broad, and square at the points as those of a griffon, but there was rather more curve at the elbow. A lightish spot near the tips of the quills, the rich tawny breast and white head, keenly turning from side to side, were very conspicuous from below; but the distinguishing characteristic of the bird is its tail. This is very long, and continues broadening out for half its length, thence narrowing down acutely to the sharp wedge-shaped tip.

Presently the bird appeared to enter some great crags—already hidden from view by an intervening bluff—and the hopes of a shot revived. Benitez was protesting against the idea of spending another night here, with no food for man or beast, when the Lammergeyer solved the question by re-appearing, and after a few fine aërial evolutions, winged his way direct towards the distant sierras beyond Grazalema.

That night we reached the little *venta* of the Parada del Valle: the landlord could hardly get over the curiosity of our wishing to wash before dinner, and for some minutes revolved like a swivel-mitrailleuse, expectorating all over the floor while pondering this thing in his mind. "Ahora?" at last he inquired. "Si! ahora mismo!" we replied, when he went and brought a thing that looked like a tin plate, containing about a breakfast-cupful of water.

El Valle is a straggling little village situate in the mouth of one of the defiles leading into the mountains, and consists of a few low cottages and a single country-house—a rare thing in Spain—embowered amidst orange and olive-groves. The orange harvest was in full swing, and the villagers one and all busy gathering the golden fruit into heaps, and packing it upon mules for market; some also in the long wooden cases one sees about Covent Garden. The only sign-board in the little one-sided street displayed the words "Dentista y Sangrador"—the Spaniards, by the way, are strong believers in bleeding: it seems the one known remedy, efficacious for all the ills

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of the flesh, as the writer once learned by experience, when having had a slight sunstroke, he awoke to find a rural medico in the act of applying the lancet to his arm.

Before dawn we started for Jerez, and in a detached crag of the sierra we obtained a fine adult male golden eagle which had breakfasted early on a rabbit. Like most Spanish examples, this eagle was much splashed with white below, especially on the thighs. Shortly after, on a bare stretch of maize stubble, we rode fairly into a pack of little bustard, and though the gun was in the slings a quick shot secured three—one to the first barrel, and a brace, winged, to the second. A long skein of cranes came gaggling over as we breakfasted on the banks of Guadalete, and, passing the Agredera, by evening the long ride was over, and we were once more amidst the grateful comforts of Jerez de la Frontera. Only for a brief period, however, did these delay us, for on the following evening we set out on a night expedition to the marisma.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOME OF THE LAMMERGEYER.

SINCE the time of those earlier efforts to scrape an acquaintance with the Lammergeyer (some of which form the subject of the last chapter), we have at length enjoyed opportunities of observing this grand bird in its true home, and here add a short summary of these later experiences.

Broadly speaking, this bird may be said to exist in all the higher mountain regions of Spain; but, as a rule, in small and decreasing numbers. In the north, there are eyries in Guipúzcoa and Navarre, one or two within sight of the French frontier; others in the Cordilleras of Leon and the Asturias—the magnificent gorge known as the Desfiladero de la Deva, being an immemorial haunt. We have observed them in the great central sierras of Castile, and they are known (but probably do not breed) in the Guadarrama range, within sight of Madrid. Nowhere common, there are yet more sporadic pairs to be seen sweeping low on the steep brown mountain-sides of certain Andalucian and Estremenian sierras than anywhere else in Spain. Here, however, as elsewhere, their numbers are being yearly reduced by the deadly poison laid by hill-farmers for wolves, and, in some cases, expressly for the Lammergeyer itself; for, rightly or wrongly, the great bird bears an ill-repute, and being, moreover, during the breeding-season, of confiding disposition—more so than eagle or vulture—is easily killed at the nest.

The Gypaëtus, like the noble eagles, is essentially a solitary bird, each pair (they remain paired for life) re-

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quiring a mountain region exclusively their own, and shunning the near propinquity of vultures and other large raptores. It is no doubt this trait of its character that explains its comparative absence from our "home" mountains round Ronda, and the failure of our search for it in that district; for the ramification of mountain-ranges which occupies that southernmost apex of Europe swarms with vultures, which crowd every crag and precipice in numbers quite unknown elsewhere. Such conditions are distasteful to the solitude-loving Lammergeyer.

Yet, while shunned as near neighbours, it appears certain that the vultures perform services of value to their nobler congener. Their office consists in stripping the skeleton of flesh, and leaving prepared for the "quebranta-huesos" (bone-smasher) his much preferred *bonne-bouche* of marrow-bones. Thus, while the respective haunts of the two species remain distinct, their hunting-areas must coincide.

The Lammergeyer disdains carrion; is never seen at those seething vulture-banquets which form so characteristic a spectacle in rural Spain; but he loves the *bones*, and his habit of carrying huge tibia and femora into the upper air, thence dropping them upon rocks, has been known since the days of Æschylus. Hence the fouler feeders are useful to him; he requires their assistance, but demands that they keep a respectful distance. His attitude towards the vultures may be compared with that of certain high-souled anthropoids of human affinity, who utilize their humbler neighbours and cut them dead next day!

Thus it happens that while in a range of sierra inhabited by Griffons, the Lammergeyer will not be found, yet a pair of the latter usually have their eyrie at no great distance from the vulture-colony.*

During our ibex-shooting campaigns among the Mediterranean sierras, we frequently fell in with this species.

* Our own experience on this point would not enable us to assert this fact so positively—indeed we have observed instances in which the reverse case *appeared* to obtain; but the circumstance has been stated to us by an ornithologist whose authority stands beyond question or doubt.

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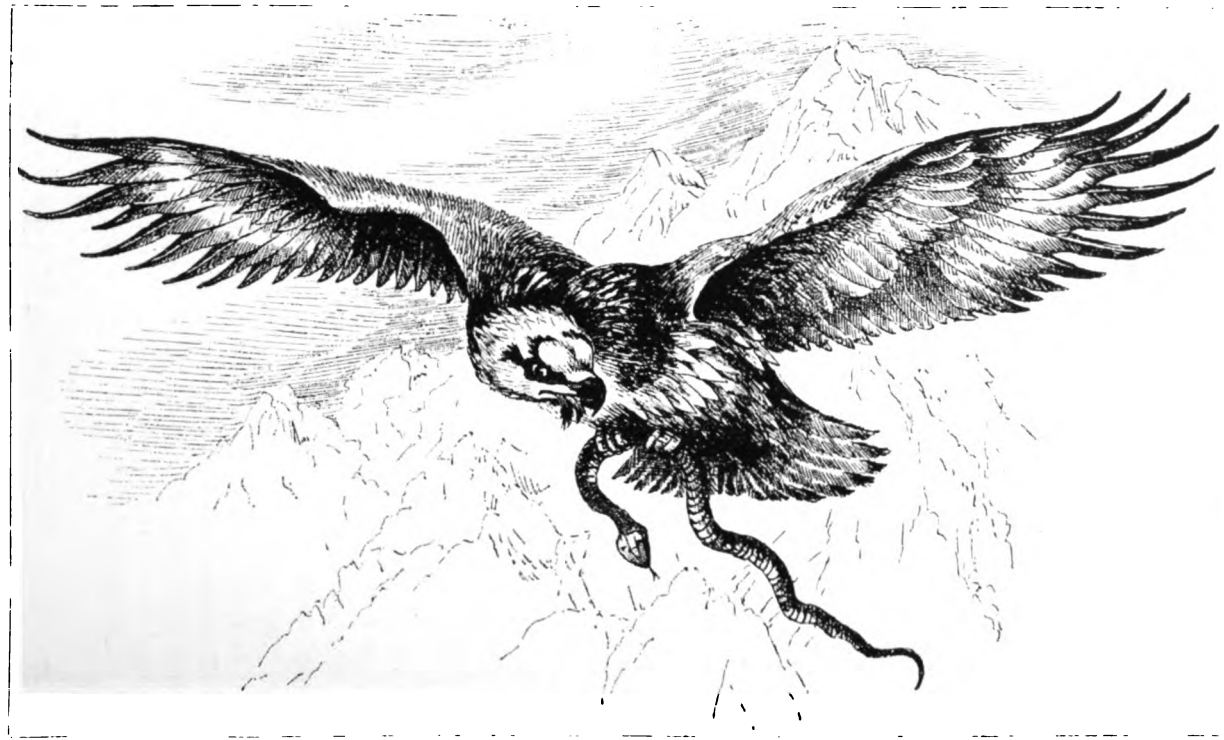

Plate XXXV. LAMMERGEYER. A sketch from life in the Sierra Bermeja. Page 309.

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It was almost the first bird seen in the Sierra Bermeja, where a superb adult passed slowly along our line, carrying what appeared to be a *live* snake in his claws, some four feet of writhing reptile dangling beneath. The Lammergeyer, by the way, like the eagle, carries everything in its claws, not in the beak. We were rather surprised at seeing this bird here, the local hunters having specially assured us that only "aguilas reales" bred in that sierra. This name, however, proved to be that *here* applied to the Lammergeyer; its proper recipient, the Golden Eagle (a pair of which were nesting in a crag not far off) being known as "aguila negra."

Vultures, it may be mentioned, were chiefly remarkable by their absence in these mountains—one only saw a solitary Griffon at long intervals, and in that barren rocky-mountain region (afterwards mentioned), in which we found the Lammergeyer most numerous, vultures were seldom seen. Yet *Buiteras*, "Griffonries," so to speak, existed at certain intervals, say, six or eight leagues apart, throughout the whole of those sierras.

This pair of Lammergeyers, which we enjoyed watching during some days, soon disclosed to us both the position of their present abode and also that of a former year, entering the latter crag almost as often as the then tenanted nursery.

Perched, as we were, a thousand feet above, it was a glorious ornithological spectacle to watch these grand birds sailing to and fro unsuspicious and unconscious of our presence, their lavender backs and outstretched pinions gleaming like silver in the sunshine. Slowly they would glide down the gorge till lost to sight around an angle; returning half an hour later, and passing beneath our post, would circle for a minute or two round the rock-stack. Not a motion of those rigid pinions till close to the mouth of the eyrie, then the great wings closed, and the bird disappeared within its cave.

Both eyries were situate in similar positions—in abrupt stacks of rock which protruded from the rugged mountain slope, but *both* quite *low* down, almost at the bottom of

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the 3,000-foot gorge across which the two nests faced each other. The Lammergeyer, we have now ascertained, does *not* breed, as we had expected, in those more stupendous precipices beloved of *Aquila bonelli*, and whose height dwarfs even an eagle to the similitude of the homely kestrel; but rather, either in rock-stacks such as those (often not 100 feet high) which flank the lower *gargantas*, or corries of the sierra, or in those generally loftier crags which often belt the base of each individual mountain.

The actual site of the nest is a small cave—rather than a crevice—and a huge mass of material, the accumulation of years, usually covers the whole floor. In one case, not less than a cart-load of sticks, branches, and twigs of cistus and heath had been collected, covering a circular space some six feet in diameter by two in depth. The present nest was hardly so large, and was completed with dead vine-branches, the prunings of the previous autumn;—and contained, besides an old *alparagata*, or hempen sandal, several cows' hoofs, and the dried leg and foot of a wild-goat. There was, however, no carrion about, nor any very offensive smell, such as would have characterized the home of a vulture.

To an outsider, the feat of scaling even a 100-foot crag, when fairly sheer, seems no easy undertaking; but our two mountain-bred lads made light work of it, one escalading the Lammergeyer's fortress from below, the other from above (which proved the easier way), and actually meeting in the eyrie. Some goatherds, hearing of our wish to secure a "quebranta-huesos," had removed the single young bird an hour or two previously. This grotesque and most uncouth fledgeling was then (at end of March) about the size of a turkey, covered with grey-white down, and with beak and crop so disproportionately heavy that a recumbent position appeared almost a necessity. The youngster kept up a constant querulous whistle when visited, and consumed, we were told, four pounds of meat daily. A month later the feathers were beginning to show through the down, and the daily consumption of meat had doubled.

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In a remote region of the Sierra Nevada, during the spring of 1891, the writer visited several eyries of the Lammergeyer—each nest, in construction and situation, resembling those already described, but the season (April) was too late to secure eggs, this species breeding very early—in January. The young—usually only one, though two eggs are often laid—at this season were about one-third feathered. These nests were in the midst of a peculiarly barren and rocky district of the great Eastern Sierras, the precise locality of which it may be as well to leave unwritten. Two of the eyries were in low belts of protruding rock which broke the steep slope of the sierra, a third in a detached crag about 150 feet in height. The latter, however, was easily accessible (by rope) from above. The Lammergeyer, when breeding, is less cautious than eagle or vulture, sitting close, even while preparations for an assault on its stronghold are being made close at hand.

The adults measure from 8 feet 6 inches to 9 feet in expanse of wing, and the wedge-shaped white head with its bristly beard and scarlet eyelids, its cat-like irides, and the black bands that pass through the eye, give the bird a peculiarly ferocious aspect. When on the wing, as Prince Rudolph remarks, these features, together with the long rigid wings, cuneate tail, and the mixture of hoary grey, black, and bright yellow in its plumage, distinguish the Gypaëtus at a glance from any other living creature, and lend it a strange, almost a dragon-like appearance.

Its claws, though less acutely hooked than those of the eagle, are sharp and powerful weapons—quite different to the worn and blunted claws of vultures, though the central toe in *both* is much longer than the two outside ones.

The industry of the peasantry of these wild regions of Nevada deserves a passing remark. As high as rye or other crops will grow, almost every foot of available ground is brought under cultivation. Precipitous, stony slopes are terraced with a perseverance that rivals, though on a smaller scale, the vineyards of Alto Douro, elsewhere described. Scanning the heights with a field-glass, one

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descries a man working on some jutting point or tiny patch of tillage so steep that a stone would hardly lie. All these folk, towards nightfall, betake themselves to the quaint but unsavoury hamlets that hang on some ridge of the sierra—and not the human folk only, but the pigs, the goats, and the donkeys forbye—each beast making straight for its own abode. Along each rock-paved street at dusk they come at a run, looking neither to right nor left till each beast bolts, without ceremony, into its own abode. Some five-and-twenty of the larger

OUR QUARTERS AT QUENTAR DEL RIO.

"domestic" animals (I take no count of dogs, hens, or the like) shared with me and sundry natives our scanty lodgment, whence at earliest dawn the braying of asses, cock-crowing, and porcine squalls, drove us betimes of a morning.

In one hill-village, there being no *posada*, we put up in the outhouse of a mill: but, amidst sacks of grain and malodorous mules, we passed a lively evening, for one by one the serranos dropped in to chat with the "Ingléses"; the

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wine-skin was replenished, and Manuel struck up some snatches of "Don Rodrigo de Bivar" and songs of the ancient chivalry. Maiden figures soon flitted in the darkness outside, and coyly accepting an invitation to enter, our barn resounded with the music of castanet and guitar, while lissom forms and light fandango graced its erewhiles unlovely floor.

Next morning our guide, Manolo Osorio Garcia, was drunk—a most unusual thing in Spain! We left him to sleep off his *borachera*, and were glad to get rid of him, for—again, most unusual—he was constantly pestering not only for wine, but for boots, gunpowder, and other things—requests that, when luggage is reduced to a minimum, cannot be conveniently complied with.

Despite their industry there is, nevertheless, woful poverty amid the peasants of Nevada. Whole tribes live in caves and excavations in the mountain-sides—filthy holes, shared, of course, by the beasts, and devoid of the remotest approach to comfort or decency. Even in the larger villages the ordinary sanitary precautions are utterly neglected, disease is frequent, and death sweeps in broad swathes. Early one morning Manuel came in to tell us that in the hamlet, at which we had arrived the previous night, "the people were dying by dozens each day of small-pox, that ten children had already succumbed that morning, and that he was very ill himself." We accordingly left at once, meeting in the pass above the village a drove of several hundred black pigs. Our horses planted their feet firmly on the rocks, and for some minutes we stood encompassed in a torrent of swine, which raced and jostled beneath us.

In Spain the Gypaëtus is yearly decreasing in numbers. A decade ago they were fairly numerous in the vast area of rock mountains which stretches between Granada and Jaen. To-day a week may be spent in that district without so much as even a distant view of this grand bird. The reason is unquestionably the use of poison (*veneno*), which is laid out broadcast by the goatherds for the special benefit of wolves, but which is equally fatal to the Lammergeyer.

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Wolves, by the way, during the severe winter of 1890–1, were particularly numerous and destructive in the Sierra Nevada, descending to lower levels than usual, demolishing whole flocks, and even attacking human beings when found alone. In one instance all that could be found of a poor goat-herd, who had been missing for some weeks, was his boots!

This brings us again to the question of the habits of the Gypaëtus, and especially of its food. Some naturalists seem inclined to hold that the bird is only a *vulture*, subsisting on carrion, and fearing to attack any living prey. The goatherds of Nevada, however (rightly or wrongly), do not share this view. One kindly old hill-farmer, at whose lonely cottage we spent a couple of nights, assured us that the "quebrantones," as he called them, were as destructive to his new-born kids in spring-time as the wolves themselves, and added that he laid out the *veneno* in special spots for each of his enemies. Only three days before, he asserted with vehement emphasis, he had witnessed a Lammergeyer strike down a week-old kid, its mate meanwhile driving off the dam. So intent was the bird on demolishing its victim that the farmer approached within a few yards and threw his stick at it as it rose. The kid, however, was dead. He insisted that the robber was no Golden Eagle (which he knew well), but "*de los Barbudos malditos!*" —one of those accursed bearded fellows!

Again, on a single *majada*, or goat-breeding establishment, in Estremadura, we were told that forty odd kids had been killed that spring by one pair of Lammergeyers before the enraged tenant was able to shoot them. We saw one of the birds—a superb adult Gypaëtus.

Here also is the evidence of the veteran *cazador*, Manuel de la Torre, a man of keen observation and intelligence, and the best field-naturalist we have met in Spain: "The Lammergeyer seeks far and wide for prey, preferring bones to anything else, but also eating carrion on necessity; and in spring, when it has young, kills many young sheep and goats, both wild and tame. I have seen it take snakes and other reptiles, and the largest and finest I ever shot (now in Madrid Museum) was in the act

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of eating a rabbit I had just seen it kill. This was in the Pardo. A dead hare or rabbit is the best bait to attract the Gypaëtus to the gun; it regularly hunts both. The Neophron I have never seen take any living thing; it only eats carrion, garbage, and offal, but I have found dead snakes in its nests. The Gypaëtus, like the vultures and some eagles, feed their young for some months on half-digested food, disgorged from their own crops." This is the evidence of one who has seen more of the Lammergeyer than any other living naturalist, and it is for this reason that, contrary to our practice, we have accepted what may be called hearsay evidence.

It is for these reasons that we have retained the distinctive title of Lammergeyer, now generally discarded in favour — on mistaken grounds, we think — of the name of "Bearded Vulture." Independently of the fact that our subject is no more a vulture than it is an eagle, surely a distinctive name is preferable to further iteration of the wearisome monotony—ay, poverty—of ornithological nomenclature. Have we not run to death those compound epithets, "long-legged," "black-tailed," "white-shouldered," and the like? Even on the assumption—not proven in this case—that the word conveys an inference not strictly accurate, there are precedents for its retention, *e.g.*, Caprimulgus, Goatsucker, Nycticorax, Bernicla, the Bernacle Goose, Oyster-catcher, and many more. We hesitate to accept such substitutes as Tures and Bearded Vulture for the time-honoured designations of Ibex and Lammergeyer.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

RAMON AND THE TWO BIG RAMS.

AN INCIDENT OF IBEX-STALKING.

For more than an hour we had been lying expectant, Ramon and I. Our position was in a tumble of rocks, which commanded the approach to a pass—a little *portillo*, the only one by which the beetling crags above were surmountable, even to an ibex. The pass was a narrow cleft or fissure, traversing transversely the whole height of the crags, whose sheer dolomite precipices otherwise presented an utterly unscaleable face. Our post was a favourable one, hence it was with a tinge of disappointment that we observed the appearance of one of our drivers on the heights of the opposite sky-line.

Ramon lay just in front of me on the narrow shelving ledge, his head considerably lower than his feet, his lithe body entwined around a projecting rock-buttress, while his keen eye surveyed everything that moved in the panorama of wild rock-chaos beneath. During these hours of meditation I began more clearly to understand one, at least, of the *raisons d'être* for that remarkable acuteness of smell which is attributed to the ibex. The ibex-hunters invariably assured us that the goats relied more on their sense of smell than on that of sight—"they have more nose than eyes—*mas nariz que ojos*," in Spanish phrase. This, I now realized, was not, after all, so inexplicable, for the skin-clad hunter before me was decidedly aromatic. It became easy of comprehension that his presence might be more readily perceptible to the nose than to the eyes; for, while Ramon's serpentine form, curving round a rock-angle, and appearing to fit into its sinuosities, was all but invisible, his whereabouts, even to human olfactory organs, might

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probably be detected at a considerable distance. No wonder the native hunter is careful to keep always under the lee of the breeze.

"Do you see where Guarro is now?" presently remarked Ramon, "crossing the ridge below the glacier-foot." After scanning for some minutes every inch of the spot indicated with a strong field-glass, I made out at length a minute moving dot that might be our friend Guarro y Guarro, the ruddy-faced goatherd, who was in charge of the *batida*.* "Well, that is where I shot the first of the two big *machos* on Thursday—the other on these broken pinnacles lower down on the right." To kill two first-rate males, single-handed, in a day was no small feat, and Ramon's tale of the achievement was an interesting sporting episode.

"I was attending my goats," he said, "in the Arroyo del Cerradillo, the ravine above where we shot the small *macho* yesterday; and as I came within sight of the high crags at its summit, I crept carefully forward, 'speering' round the rocks to see if any ibex chanced to be in them. They are a favourite haunt of the goats during the day, and as there are some large males on that side, it is always worth while to be prepared and cautious. That morning there were two—both large ibex, with very long horns, as long as a man's arms. They were at first walking away, but soon lay down on a ledge where it was possible to crawl to within fifty or sixty yards of them. Unfortunately, part of the stalk was through soft snow, and, in consequence, the gun missed fire."

Ramon's gun, by the way, was an exceptionally rickety old weapon, with many signs of rude repairs, and bore on its single barrel, counter-sunk in golden letters, the inscription "Plasencia, 1841." No doubt it owed the Imperial exchequer of Spain something like fifty pounds

* Both my companion Ramon Romatez, and Juan Guarro y Guarro, as well as several of our other men, were independent yeomen, owning from 150 to 200 goats apiece, which they pastured on the slopes of the sierra. They were, however, glad to accompany us for the sum of eight *reales* (one shilling and eightpence) a day.

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sterling in respect of license duty during half a century, not one centimo of which is ever likely to find its way into the Spanish Treasury.

Poor Ramon, though well provided with powder and ball, had but two caps ; hence it was necessary, after the misfire, to draw the faithless charge in order to save intact the two precious *mitos*. " Meanwhile," continued Ramon, " the two ibex had moved up the rocks, and soon crossed the sky-line just above those snow-gullies. They did not appear much alarmed, never having seen me ; so I followed round the shoulder of the main spur, as the goats had gone down-wind. In the afternoon I came up with them, just where I showed you. There were now four of them—all big males, and as the two nearer were lying down in a favourable position, I got a good shot, killing the largest quite dead, with a bullet through chest and heart.

" The other three, still uncertain whence the shot had come, owing to the echo reverberating among the hills, hesitated a few moments, and then sprang downwards, one passing so near that, had I had another gun, I might perhaps have killed him. My dog, which had followed me, and which was well accustomed to herding my own goats, now gave chase. I knew the ibex could not pass the ice-slope of Cerradillo [two miles away], and in the hope that I might cut off their retreat by the Garganta del Canchon, I set off, after reloading, to cross the two ravines." (This, by the way, would have taken an average Englishman at least an hour's difficult and laborious climbing.) " I reached those steeple-rocks on the second ridge just in the nick of time to meet the three ibex ascending on the other side. The dog was nowhere in sight, though he was still following. I had not gained the pass two minutes when the ibex crossed in front, travelling slowly over a patch of snow, where I shot the largest of the three at about eighty paces distant. He fell to the shot, floundering for some seconds in the loose snow, but recovered and went on some distance, till the dog at last came up with him and pulled him down."

On surveying the field of operations carefully through

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the binoculars, and estimating the distances traversed respectively by Ramon and his three opponents, we could only marvel at the wondrous feat he had performed in crossing that fearful gorge, with its miles of snow and rocks, in time to cut out the hunted and light-footed

ibex. The latter, it is true, had something like four times the distance to cover, but even that, one would have thought, was far too light a handicap.

These two ibex were both eight-year old males, and their horns measured, respectively :—

No. 1.—Length, 28½ inches. Circumference, 9¼ inches.
No. 2.— ,, 27½ ,, ,, 9 ,,

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE IBEX-HUNTER'S BETROTHAL.

BERNÁL GONZALVO was the smartest of all the shepherd-lads in the mountain village of Valdama, and universally acknowledged as the best shot and most successful ibex-hunter in that part of the sierra. But in his wanderings near the clouds, his thoughts of late had often strayed from his flock: other music than the tinkling of their many bells was sweeter to his ear. His thoughts would carry him a thousand times a day to the hamlet which nestled far below. In short, Bernál was in love; for the first time in his simple life of three-and-twenty years his spirit was made captive by a daughter of Eve. Concha, the pretty brunette of the *parador*, had heard the old, old story from his lips, and he had found favour in her eyes. Concha's good luck made her the envy of all the girls of the hamlet. For not only was Bernál a handsome lad of the sprightly, graceful type peculiar to the mountain region, but he was also rich—he owned over two hundred goats, and had inherited a two-roomed *choza* and an acre of trailing vines.

Engagements in these primitive nooks of the world are not of long duration. The following week it was arranged his betrothal should be announced, and the *dichos* declared—the custom of avowing publicly the mutual acceptance of nuptial obligations, which in Spain corresponds with our "calling the banns." On such occasions it is customary in Valdama for the bridegroom-elect to provide a feast whereat the friends of the *fiancés* assemble after this preliminary ceremony. The marriage itself

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does not take place till some days later. After the *dichos* the rest of that day is spent in conviviality.

Bernál owned plenty of goats, but, being a lad of some originality, he determined to give *his* "novia" something different to the regulation marriage-feast of stewed kid. Concha's nuptials should mark an epoch in the annals of Valdama—nothing less than the venison of a wild ibex should betoken his plighted troth. He was a mighty hunter, and Concha's first offering at his hands should be one appropriate to his fame and skill with the rifle-ball.

The season was mid-winter and the snow lay deep and treacherous on all the great sierras that overhang his native village. Few are venturesome enough to brave the dangers and hard work that the pursuit of ibex in winter must entail. All the more reason why Bernál should distinguish himself, and all the more acceptable the gift.

On the morning before the ceremony of the *dichos*, he set out at daybreak; his gun slung on his shoulder, a crust of brown bread, some meat and olives in his "alforjas," and his favourite dog "Vasco" at his heel. As the earlier risers among the damsels of the hamlet wended their way towards the well for the day's supply of water, each with a big brown *cantaro* poised on her head, they lingered to scan the hill and watch Bernál's retreating figure as he leaped upwards from rock to rock, ascending towards the snowy pinnacles of Las Lanzas. Soon he disappeared from view, turning off into the snow-filled gullet of the *Salto del lobo*—the wolf's leap.

The day was bright and glorious as a winter's day in Spain can be, but before dusk heavy cloud-banks had darkened the western horizon, and the sun sank in lurid light amidst gathering murk that boded ill for the night. Darkness had set in, but Bernál had not returned. Hour after hour passed by without sign of him, and Concha's anxiety grew more and more intense. Not all the sympathy of her maiden friends could cheer her; but some consolation the poor girl tried to find in the assurances of the rough hunters who came to comfort

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her—Bernál, they asserted, was safe enough; he had been caught in those scudding snow-clouds, and, as many a belated herdsman had done before, had sought shelter for the night in some cave or crevice, awaiting the return of daylight before attempting the descent. Had he, as was probable, succeeded in shooting an ibex, it was natural that with such a burden he would find himself unable to return in the short winter's day. With these and similar assurances poor Concha was fain to console herself.

Before midnight the threatened storm burst: the gale howled through the gorges of the sierra and along the narrow street of Valdama. Thickly, too, fell the snow; before dawn the whole landscape lay enveloped in the white mantle, and the bye-ways of the hamlet were choked to the lintels. Snow-wreaths hung in majestic forms over each prominent escarpment, threatening destruction to the villagers' stock of olives, figs, and vines which grew beneath. The older men gathered in knots discussing Bernál's chances of escape from the higher regions; no help was possible, and the general opinion was that till the gale had partially swept the dry powdery snow into the ravines and hollows, his descent would be perilous, even if possible. Again the day passed by without sign of the missing bridegroom. The *dichos* were postponed, and the hamlet slept with a heavy load of doubt and fear oppressing its mind.

Thus passed two days—three since the adventurous hunter had set forth, but on the fourth morning it was thought an ascent might be attempted. Three search parties, each composed of three mountaineers, started in different directions, but at nightfall they returned without news or trace of lost Bernál.

Next morning the search was renewed. Towards noon the party, led by our friend Claudio, descried among the bare rocks of a ridge high above them a moving object. Their cries and shots attracted attention, and presently poor Vasco, Bernál's faithful companion, struggled to reach them. The three men decided to continue calling out Bernál's name, in order to convey to the dog the idea

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that they were in search of his master; but this the wise beast seemed to have intuitively understood, for he immediately set out in the direction whence he had come. Claudio and his two companions followed Vasco's lead for nearly a league, when the dog stopped and commenced scratching away the snow from below a projecting rock. Here were found the "alforjas" (wallet) of the lost man, still containing the bread and olives with which he had set out. Vasco at once continued his course, leading the way to one of the deepest and most magnificent *cañons* of the whole sierra. Here, on the very verge of a precipice of a thousand feet sheer, the dog directed the rescuers to his master's gun, which lay buried in the snow within a foot of the abyss. The gun was *cocked*—a sure sign to the *serranos* that at the moment of leaving it Bernál had been in presence of game, momentarily expecting a shot. Further the dog would not, or could not, go; yet no sign of Bernál could be seen on the crag-top. Clearly he must have slipped, fallen over into the tremendous abyss beneath. The men separated, two going to right and left to seek some spot, some cleft or ledge, by which the crag might be descended, the third remaining above to guide the search. It was a perilous service on those slippery, ice-clad rocks. After an hour's labour, Claudio managed to reach a ledge midway down the precipice, just beneath the spot where Guàrro remained on the height above: and here the dog (which had steadily followed the climber whose course at the moment led in the right direction) at once indicated a point above some big boulders which lay balanced on the narrow shelf. Here, beneath the frozen snow, lay poor Bernál Gonzalvo, almost every bone in his once shapely form smashed into splinters by that terrible fall of 500 feet. And there, on that dizzy ledge, his remains lie still. There they had to be left; for it was found impossible to remove the body, or to carry it along the ledges and "chimneys" by which the rescue party had descended. It was, after all, an appropriate resting-place for the luckless ibex-hunter. The three men heaped up a pile of stones to protect his remains from the maw of

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vulture or prowling wolf, and there we may leave him in peace.

Perhaps it would be wiser to leave the story, too, at this point; but we are simply historians without aspiration for the novelist's *rôle*, and are impelled to complete faithfully this sad little story of the sierra. Concha was, of course, almost beside herself with grief. During the long winter months, while the snow whirled round the ravines of Valdama, the poor girl remained inconsolable. But time is a wondrous restorer. When spring came round, and the vines and chestnuts unfolded their shoots, making Valdama all green and beautiful, then youth and buoyant spirits reasserted their power, and, less than a twelve-month afterwards, Concha had found consolation. Friend Claudio, the discoverer of her lost lover's remains, and to whom we are indebted for this little tale, had meanwhile become her husband.

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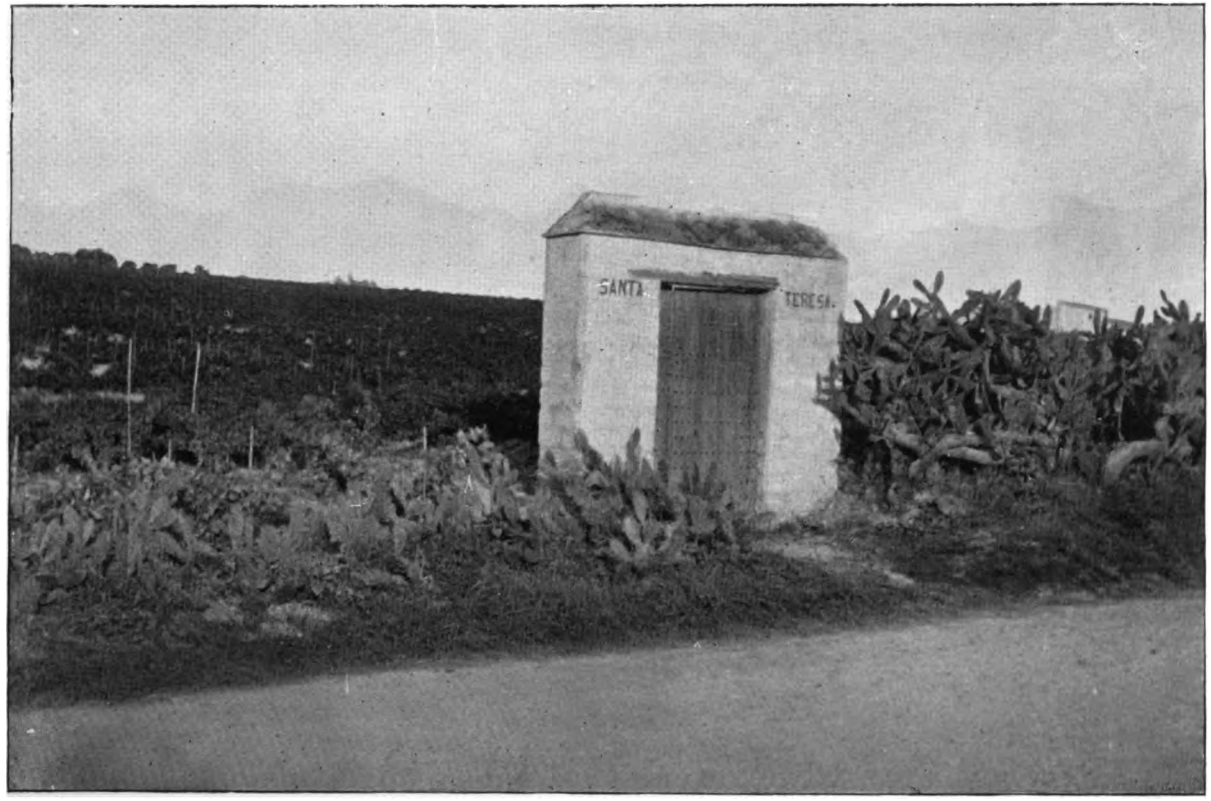

Plate XXXVI. GATEWAY AND VINEYARD. Page 325.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

ON VITICULTURE IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

It is a pleasant contrast in the blazing month of July, when one passes from the parched stubbles of the corn-land, or the arid half-shade of the *olivar*, and enters upon the green luxuriance of the vineyard. Eye and mind are refreshed by that broad expanse of spreading vines clothing hill and valley with their close-set trailing verdure.

Before us stands the somewhat pretentious gateway in the fence of prickly-pear which surrounds the property—a handsome wrought-iron lattice gate swung on stone pillars which bear the inscription "Nuestra Señora de Piedad,—de Caridad," "Cruz Santa," or some such title. Passing through, one walks waist-deep along a narrow path-way amidst green vines. No need to ask which is Nature's most favoured plant in this sunny land. Stand on one of the Jerez hills at this season and look across the districts of the Marcharnudo or Carrascal and see the triumph of the vine. All other vegetation pants beneath the pitiless sun; tree, shrub, and bush droop withered and lifeless; the grass and wild-flowers have disappeared from off the face of the calcined earth, not a blossom remains; the bees have lost their employment, and already their persecutors, the Bee-eaters, are departing for less torrid regions. Yet all around lie thousands of acres of vines in the full exuberance of life and vigour, drinking in growth and increase from the very rays that are fatal to all beside. Vine roots reach down very great depths into the earth—often twenty feet and more, the tap-roots threading their way through the slightest cracks or

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cleavages of what *appears* solid rock, thickening out again as they reach a wider fissure of "fatter" soil, as may be seen in road or railway-cuttings.

Nothing can be a greater contrast than the appearance of the vines at Christmas or in January when not even a branch survives, each vine then being cut back, till nothing remains but a gnarled, knobby stump some two feet high, limbless and lifeless. The vineyards then assume a barren hungry look, a grey expanse studded with rows of the inanimate stocks.

During early spring much care and labour are devoted

VINES IN MARCH.

to the vineyards. The soil around each vine is drawn back with hoes and small adze-shaped spades, the blades of which are turned inwards, till the plant stands in the centre of a hollowed square, the heaped-up earth around serving to catch and direct the moisture towards its roots. For a time the vineyards resemble huge chess-boards, till in April the spreading tendrils and bright green leaves once more hide the face of the earth from view.

The workmen who are employed upon these operations

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have assigned to them a large barn-like room on the ground-floor of the *casa de viñas*, destitute of any semblance of furniture or fittings. In this they cook their *pucheros*, smoke infinite cigarettes, and when times are peaceful, wind up the day with a few touches on the guitar and weird Andalucian melodies; but during the troublous periods of anarchy and discontent so frequent in unhappy Spain, politics supplant music and fierce discussions rage far into the night. Well do we remember the violence of these disputes during the *mano negra* fever, and earlier, in the spring of 1872, when living at a vineyard with only a floor between us and the peasant politicians. Amidst the babel of contending voices one heard perpetually bandied about the names of Zorilla, Castelar, Sagasta, and others of the *haute politique* of Spain. The lot of the Spanish labourer is none of the happiest, certainly; but it may be doubted if they will mend it by argument and wordy warfare any more than by force. Poor fellows! they are the raw material which the high-falutin' scoundrels who promote rebellions by popular "cries" and *pronunciamentos* use for their own ends, and then abandon to the bullets of *guardas civiles* or the sabres of the cavalry. But, good times or bad, the guitar or the revolutionary rag—whichever it may be—are at length laid aside, they stretch themselves in rows on their grass-woven mats, like sardines in a keg, and in sleep the troubled spirits are at rest.

The vineyards, some of which (especially those in the Cañaleja, Badalejo, and Caulina districts) have pedigrees that can be traced back for upwards of six hundred years, are mostly interspersed with fields of corn and groves of olive-trees, and intersected by sandy roads bordered with hedges of cane and cactus. Occasional avenues lead to picturesque villas embowered in flowering shrubs and trees, among which the adelfa, or rose-laurel, the acacia, eucalyptus and cypress are conspicuous. The hill-tops are generally crowned with snow-white *casas de viñas*, and among the vines there rise little huts of esparto called *bien-te-veos*, perched on four tall aloe-poles. These are

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the look-outs for the guards who, armed with old-fashioned fire-locks, keep watch and ward over the ripening grapes and grain.

The scene around Jerez at vintage time is a busy and picturesque one—the narrow sandy lanes alive with gaudily-trapped mules bearing panniers of grapes to the wine-presses, and creaking bullock-carts conveying newly-pressed "must" to the Jerez bodegas. The vineyards themselves are thronged with vintagers—all of the male sex, for in Andalucia woman's right to take any part is altogether ignored.

The vintagers work in gangs of ten, each under the direction of a *capatáz*, dexterously lopping off the bunches of grapes with their ever-ready *navajas*, or bowie knives. The bunches are thrown into "tinetas," square wooden boxes, each holding some twenty-five pounds of grapes. As these are filled the men hoist them on their heads and march off to the *almijar* or court adjoining the press-house. Here, after all blighted and decayed grapes are removed, they are then spread out to dry in the sun, and remain thus exposed for from one to three days, when they are ready for the press.

The long wooden troughs, or *lagares*, having been partially filled with grapes, a couple of swarthy bare-legged fellows in striped shirts, and leathern shoes studded with broad-headed nails, jump into each *lagar* and, after spreading out the bunches, commence footing it ankle-deep among the crushed fruit, while the juice pours forth through spouts into casks placed to receive it. The men dance with a rapid swaying movement which is held to express the juice from the grapes in a more satisfactory manner than can be accomplished by any known mechanical appliance.

After being trodden, the grapes are finally subjected to the action of a screw, which is fixed over the centre of each *lagar*. The pile of half-crushed fruit is enclosed in a band of esparto-matting, and the handles of the screw being turned, a wooden slab descends, and the remaining juice pours forth through the interstices of the esparto, and is

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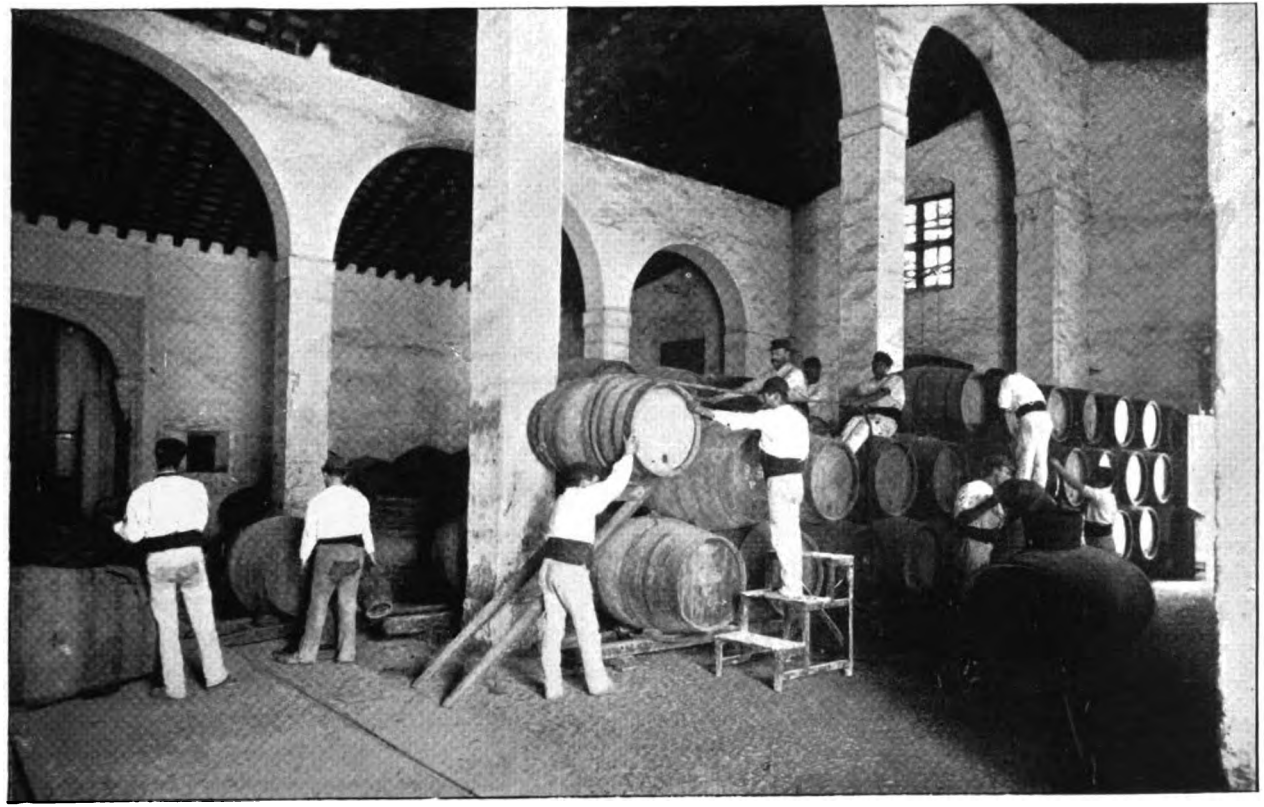

Plate XXXVII. IN A JEREZ BODEGA. Page 328.

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collected in the butts beneath. These casks, as filled, are hoisted upon bullock-carts, and sent jolting away to the Jerez bodegas.

The *vindimia*, or vintage, is always an animated scene, whether on the gently undulating vine lands of Andalucia, or in Portugal, on the steep terraced slopes of the mountains which shut in the wild Alto Douro. Afar across those Lusitanian glens resound the musical chant and characteristic sing-song ditties of the Gallegan peasantry —like *cicadas*, they sing and answer each other from hill to hill the livelong day, the happy, despised, bond-slaves of the Peninsula, who, at vintage-time, flock from their rude barren province of Galicia to revel in abundance in the Alto Douro on a couple of testoons, say, tenpence a day, supplemented by an allowance of oil, a few salted sardines, rice, and stock-fish, and of *broa*, or maize-bread, and the accommodation of mother-earth to sleep upon, with a roof overhead through which the starlight and the silvery rays of the harvest moon gleam in at a hundred chinks and crevices. A happy lot, these Gallegans, happy in the possession of content, happier far than their more impulsive brethren, the socialistic peasants of Andalucia, of whom we have just spoken.

Portugal.—The Vintage in the Alto Douro.

Fain would we pause here for a few moments among those rugged hills of the Douro, amidst which, long ago, we first witnessed the spectacle of the *vindimia*—a sight which has left a deep and pleasing impression. Everywhere on the terraced slopes are scattered groups of vintagers, whose not unmusical voices fill the still air. Heavy bullock-carts go creaking discordantly up and down the dry boulder-strewn gullies which serve as roads; droves of nimble little donkeys, with pig-skins full of wine strapped across their backs, or bringing bread for the people employed in the vineyards, wend their way along zig-zag bridle-paths; farmers with wine-samples and pedlars

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with their packs on mules, equipped with jingling bells, jog leisurely along the mountain roads; groups of buxom women, with bright-coloured kerchiefs tied over unkempt tresses, and bare brown legs, dexterously detach the bunches and fill them into baskets, the men meanwhile lazily smoking under the shade of some olive-tree till their burdens are ready. Along the mountain-paths file strings of sturdy Gallegans,* each bearing upon his shoulders a huge basket (*jigo*), crammed with grapes. The *jigo* weighs nearly a hundredweight, and the shoulders of the bearer are protected by a woolly sheep-skin. These burdens they bear to the *lagares*, where, when the great stone trough is filled, a gang of men step in and commence a sort of devil's dance, treading out the rich juice, which, after many hours' fermentation, pours in purple streams to the *tonels* below.

Within the sombre shade of the *lagares* that strange dance proceeds, at first briskly, amid laughter and song, to the squeaking notes of fiddle and guitar, the rattle of drum, and the chaff of the women who gather round the open verandas; but as the hours roll by and the air grows heavy with the exhalations of fermenting "must," the work begins to tell, and the treaders, all bespattered with purple juice, move slowly and listlessly. In vain the fiddle strikes up anew, the fife squeaks, the guitar tinkles, and overseers upbraid. After some eighteen hours of this tread-mill exercise in an atmosphere charged with soporific influences, music has lost its charm, and authority its terror. The men, by this time almost dead-beat, languidly raise first one purple leg and then the other, working on far into the watches of the night. Thus has wine been made since before Homeric times.

* Except at vintage-times the Alto Douro is almost uninhabited. Hence in early autumn, when work is plentiful, there occurs an extraordinary influx of labourers—men and women—many from considerable distances, and especially from the Spanish province of Galicia, flocking into the Alto Douro as the hop-pickers in September pour into Kent from the *arcana* of London, or as the Irish harvesters at that season flood the Midlands and North of England.

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The wine district of the Alto Douro, whence comes our port wine, is a singular region, extending some thirty miles along either bank of the river, but chiefly on the north side, in the province of Traz-os-Montes, and having a varying width of five to ten miles. The whole *paiz vinhateiro* consists of grey and arid-looking mountain-sides, divided by deep gullies and ravines, and all so steep that their soil of friable mica-schist, more like bits of broken slate than fertile earth, can only be cultivated by means of terraces roughly built up, tier above tier. Mountain after mountain has its sides thus scored with terraced lines like Cyclopean staircases, and on particular slopes as many as 150 may be counted rising one above another, the effect of which is most peculiar. Here and there a gleaming white *casa*, with its grove of orange and cypress-trees; or a water-mill, shaded by oaks and chestnuts, breaks the monotony of the landscape. Below, the yellow Douro courses swiftly, bearing picturesque boats, high-prowed and long-hulled, impelled by a white cloud of sail, and steered by a huge oar worked from a pivot in the stern-post, while far above the zone of vineyards rise mountain peaks in jagged outline.

Grapes are growing by the wayside, hanging from every crag or tree to which a vine can attach its tendrils, and, perhaps most picturesque of all, from the *ramadas* or trellises. These *ramadas* roof in the courtyard of cottage or farm, and even span the village street. As one rides through the hamlets which nestle in the valleys of the Douro, the heavy purple clusters, six or eight pounds in weight, hang temptingly just overhead—temptingly to the stranger to raise his parched lips and snatch a mouthful of the juicy spheres. Partridges, too, appreciate the luxury of a grape-feast, and in the evening, at this season (September and October), their call-note is ubiquitous. But it is terrible work to follow them amidst the tangled vines and crumbling terraces under the fierce afternoon sun; and a better chance of sport will be found at mid-day on the heather-clad ridges above. Thither, after their morning feed, they retire to enjoy a siesta, and with the aid of a good dog

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will afford excellent sport till towards 4 P.M., when they return to the lower grounds. There is a cooler breeze on these heights, and a superb panorama of the wildest region of Lusitania, bounded by the Serras do Gerez and Marão and the highlands of Traz-os-Montes. There handsome Swallowtails (*Papilio machæon*) curvette around on powerful wing, and among the shaggy heather, rocks, and rough straggling woods, one may chance upon a slumbering wolf, the *bête noir* in the winter of the Douro goatherd; though nothing ever fell in the writer's way more formidable than a black fox, for the destruction of which was awarded the premium fixed by law—300 reis, fifteen pence! It is a land of insects, from the singular mantis and merry grasshoppers of many hues, to the scorpion, and centipedes of enormous size. As evening falls the air rings—the earth seems to vibrate—with the rattle of mole-crickets and cicadas, and the gentle tinkle of the tree-frog: glowworms sparkle on each dark slope, and by the feeble light of fire-flies we have to pick a devious way along miles of broken rock and hanging thicket, by what in Portugal passes for a bridle-path.

Twenty years ago the Alto Douro could only be reached on horseback, crossing the Serra do Marão by the Pass of Quintella. A pleasant ride it was, nevertheless, in September, by Cazaes, traversing the valley of the Tamega to Amarante, famed for its peaches and "vinho verde" (green wine, so rough as to bring tears to one's eyes); thence up the slopes of the Marão, and through the granite defiles of Quintella, which look down upon Pezo da Regoa and the valley of the Corgo. It was here—in the *Baixo Corgo*—that the port wines of three generations ago were vintaged; now all the most valued growths come from further east, beyond the Corgo (Cima Corgo).

The return journey in those days (now there is a railway) was by boat, down the Douro, seventy miles, which was accomplished in one long day. Hour after hour we glide down the rapid current, through green vineyards, all resonant with the long-drawn songs of the vintagers. Now the cliffs close in, and we pass through a gorge, whose

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sides rise a thousand feet sheer from the water, overgrown with masses of broom, heath, gorse, and a variety of evergreen shrubs wherever a ledge or cranny afford hold for their roots. Gigantic aloes with broad spiked blades and towering stalks stud the rocky declivities, and the cactus, wild fig, and other sub-tropical forms of plant-life lend character to the scenery. Amidst these crags a pair or two of the handsome black and white Neophrons may generally be seen.

Dangerous during times of flood are the snag-set rapids of the Douro, as many a little cross or inscription, cut on the impending rocks, bears witness. That rude mark indicates the spot where some poor fellow has lost his life, perhaps a whole boat's crew; and our men, as we pass each memorial tablet, remove their hats and cross themselves with simple piety.

At intervals we pass picturesque cargo-boats, upward bound, and laboriously making their way against the current, motive power being supplied by a gang of watermen hauling on a tow-rope ashore. Where the path becomes precipitous, one sees the string of bare-legged men walking, as it were, down perpendicular rock faces like flies on a wall, each hanging on by the sustaining rope. As already mentioned, there is now-a-days a railway to the Upper Douro, and much of the picturesque river life of twenty years ago is a thing of the past.

Spain.—The Vintage in Andalucia—(Continued).

But we have wandered far from our original subject, and must now leave Portugal, and return to the Andalucian vintage. We are not going to enter into the technical details of wine manufacture, which have been fully described in special treatises; suffice it here to say that from the wine-press, the *must* (or juice) is run direct into casks placed beneath, and in which, almost as soon as made, the process of fermentation begins. In this state

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the young wines are removed on bullock-carts to the bodegas of Jerez, or San Lucar, and there remain till January, when fermentation is complete; the wine is then placed in clean casks, and so left to mature. The contents of each cask, however, are kept distinct and separate—that is the wine-juice that ran from the *lagar* into one cask is not mixed or blended with another.

And now follows one of the most curious circumstances known in œnology. The wines thus made—the uniform produce, be it repeated, of a single vineyard, gathered the same day, pressed in the same *lagar*, and subjected to identical treatment—develope wholly different characters and qualities. Some of the casks prove to be wines of the highest grade and value; others indifferent, some coarse, and some even vinegar. Then amongst those casks which have developed into the wines styled in Jerez *finos* (*i.e.*, soft, dry, and delicate, with a fresh, pungent flavour), there is found here and there one which has acquired the rare and highly valued *amontillado* character.

This singular inequality in development appears to be merely a matter of chance—of caprice in fermentation; and is quite inexplicable and uncontrolled by any known laws or causes. Some years ago an attempt was made to bring the light of modern science to bear on the old rule-of-thumb methods of "rearing" sherry. An English scientist of high standing essayed the task of assuring an approximately equal development of all the wines grown in one year and one vineyard. The result, however, was unsuccessful; or if an approximate level was attained it was, unfortunately, the level of mediocrity, or worse; the wines operated upon were destroyed, and the savant left Spain under a cloud.

Although the vine is almost ubiquitous throughout the south of Spain, and the production of wine practically unlimited, yet there are only two districts which yield the specific wine entitled *sherry*. These two districts are the amphitheatre of hills which surround the city of Jerez de la Frontera, and a small area of 1,500 acres in Montilla called Moriles. It must also be remembered that

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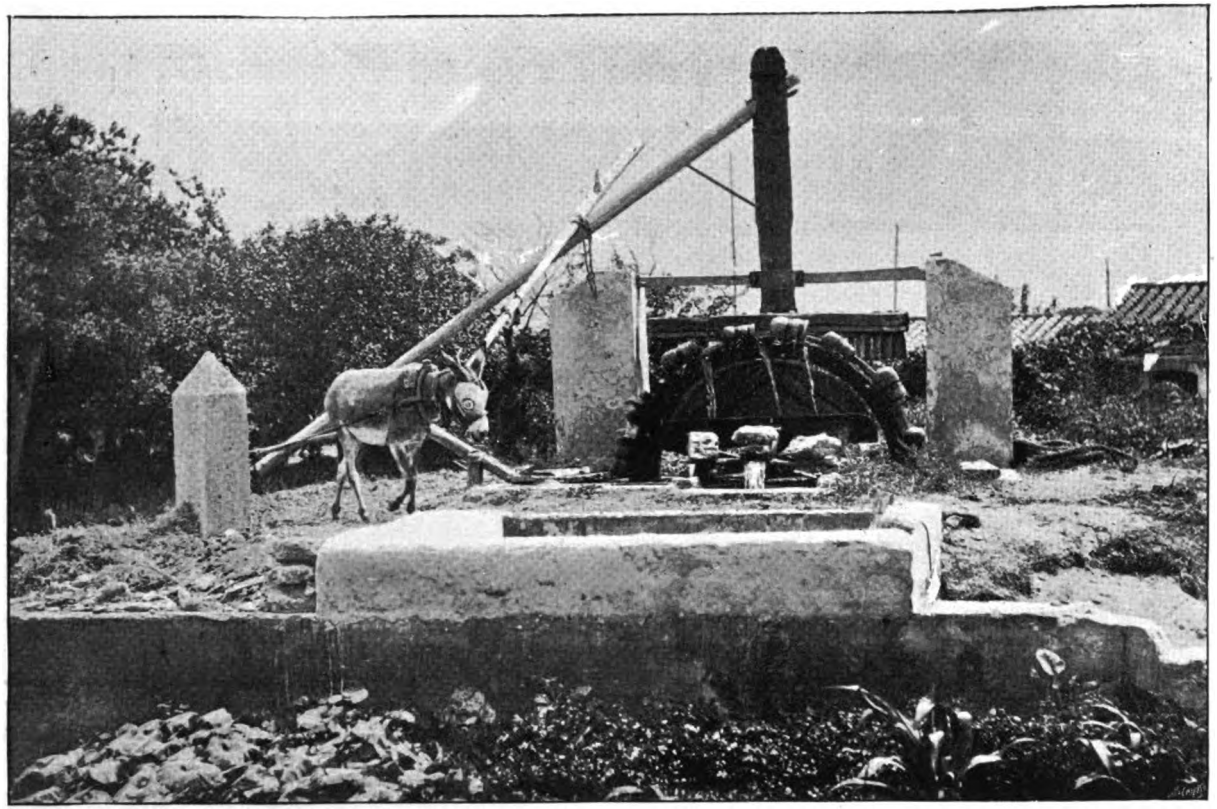

Plate XXXVIII. IRRIGATION BY WATER-WHEEL (*NORIA*). Page 334.

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there are differences in the grape as well as in the soil. The vine has several distinct natural species, as distinguished from mere varieties (whether artificial or climatic), and the character of wine is largely dependent on the vine producing it. Vast quantities of wine are grown in adjacent districts, good genuine wines, sound and wholesome, but the two localities named stand out in marked prominence. The area of the choice *vignobles* around Jerez is some 12,000 acres, divisible into four classes according to geological formation.* The average yield of the fine vineyards being two and a half butts per acre, it follows that the total annual production of first-class sherry is some 35,000 butts, or thereabouts.

In addition to the above quantity, there are also grown, as above stated, large quantities of wine in the adjoining districts. These, though pure and genuine, are but of second rank. From what we have already written, it will be apparent that in this land of the vine (and the same remark applies to Portugal), there is nothing so cheap as the grape. There is therefore no temptation to seek substitutes for this, its commonest product, or to employ other materials in its place.

Viticulture abstracts from the soil a smaller proportion of alkalies and other mineral constituents than either corn or root-crops: hence the exhaustion of the soil is slower and the vine can be cultivated on land incapable of yielding any other crop. An acre of vines on sandy soil will cost but one-half the money to cultivate, and yield three times the weight of fruit that an acre of the

* The following are the constituents of the four different classes of soil of the Jerez vignobles, according to Don Simon de Roxas Clemente:—1st. *Albariza*, chiefly consists of carbonate of lime, with a small admixture of silex and clay, and occasionally magnesia. 2nd. *Barros*, composed of quartz or sand, mixed with clay and red or yellow ochre, which forms horizontal bands extending along the coast from the mouth of the Guadalquivir as far as Conil. 3rd. *Arenas*, or pure quartz ore sand. 4th. *Bugeo*, which contains argillaceous loam, mixed with carbonate of lime, some quartz ore sand, and a large proportion of vegetable mould.—"History of Modern Wines," by Dr. Alexander Henderson, p. 190.

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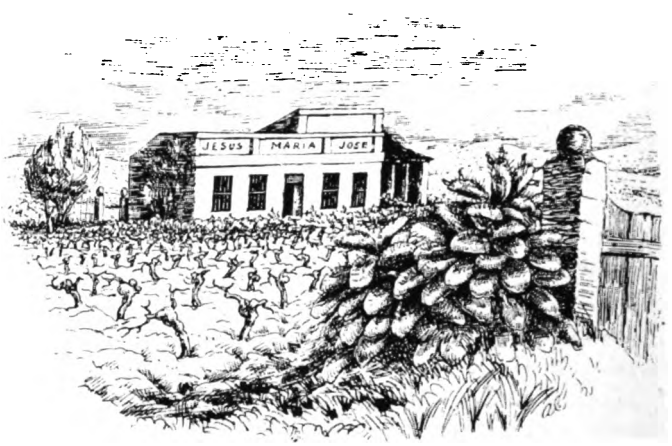
afueras will produce.* It is a curious fact that these sandy soils never yield, even phenomenally, a cask of fine wine. These better wines require years of keeping to attain the perfect development of maturity, while the others, being of a lighter description, are as good at first as they ever will be, although in appearance and flavour the grapes of the sandy soil may even seem the best. These facts serve to explain the difference in cost which must exist between the produce of the two classes of vineyard.

So much for the wines of Jerez; but sherry, though in



A VINEYARD AT JEREZ.

British eyes it looms the largest amongst the wines of Spain, and is, in fact, of the greatest intrinsic value, yet represents a mere drop in the ocean as compared with the whole produce of the land. Spain overflows with wine. Hardly a village but has its vineyards and its vintage-time, when the very earth becomes encarnadined, and when the chief care of the peasantry is rather to find casks, goat-

* Dr. Henderson makes a contrary statement in his "History of Ancient and Modern Wines," p. 190 (London, 1824); but this we imagine must be attributed to a slip of the pen, and is, in any case, erroneous.

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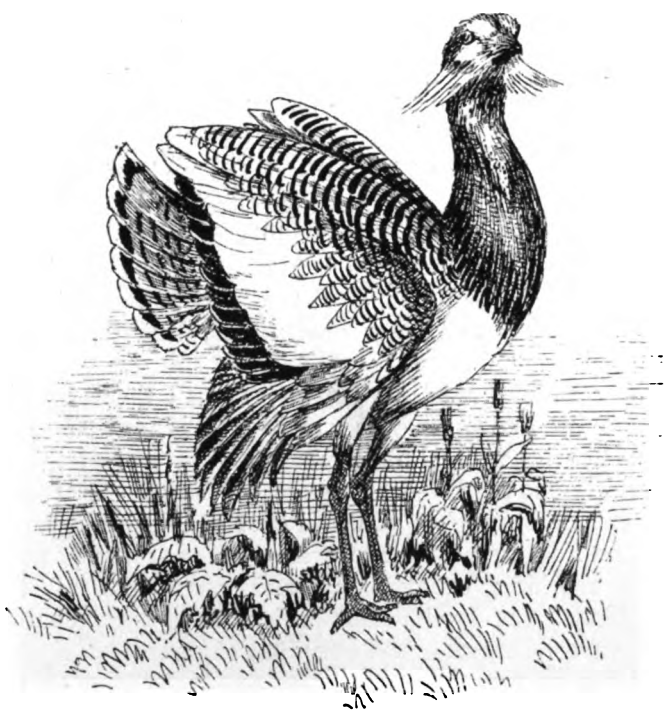
skins, or other receptacles wherein to store their redundant crop, than wine to fill them withal. In traversing many a hundred dusty leagues of the wildest parts of Spain, we seldom failed to replenish our wine-skins with good, rough, red *vino del pais*, grown on some neighbouring slope; racy of the soil, refreshing, and delicious after hard work under a torrid sun, and at an average price of two pesetas the arroba, or about one-third the price of "small beer"!

One soon grows to like and appreciate these rough red wines of Northern and Central Spain, whose generous fulness and refreshing asperity are so requisite in this hot land. After a course of several months of the Riojas and Valdepeñas of Spain, how thin tastes that first bottle of the Bordelais—price two francs—at the breakfast-buffet of Hendaye!



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CHAPTER XXX.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON THE GREAT BUSTARD.

HIS NATURAL HISTORY AND HABITS.

Is the Great Bustard polygamous or not? We have watched these birds in early spring-time, following every movement, and at quarters close enough, with the binocular, to distinguish the very feathers: we have inquired of the best and keenest bustard-shooters on the Spanish plains—men who ought to know—and yet are unable to give a positive opinion. The best ornithological authorities are also silent on the point, or treat it in doubtful terms.

The Andalucian Bustards may be divided into two classes:—(1) Those which inhabit the undulating corn-lands extending from Jerez and Utrera eastwards—by Marchena and Osuña—to Bobadilla and the borders of Malaga province, which race is *stationary* throughout the year; and (2) the Bustards of the marisma, or flat delta of Guadalquivir and other great rivers, which seasonally shift their ground.

The corn-land Bustards (as we will call them for distinction) are altogether a finer and heavier race than those of the marismas, scaling commonly twenty-nine, thirty, and thirty-one pounds—some huge old *barbones* exceeding even this great weight; while birds of the semi-migratory race run from twenty-four to twenty-six or -seven pounds, rarely reaching twenty-eight, and show less of the magnificent ruff-development which, in spring, characterizes the old males of the campiñas of Jerez.

All the year round these latter are to be seen on the same grounds. During the months of February and

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March they are in bands of from five to fifty, males and females together, though some of the former already begin at early dawn to "show off" and to indulge in those ferocious-looking rehearsals preliminary—in appearance—to a pitched battle, but which always seem to end in smoke. Round and round, in slow majestic circles, revolve the rival *barbones*, each with trailing wings and tail expanded, fan-like, over his back, the bristling head carried low, the neck swollen out to abnormal thickness. Now, on that stately parade, they meet; the champions stand face to face—intent on mortal combat. One almost fancies one can hear the rustle as they shake out their wings and set every feather on end—each striving to daunt and demoralize his opponent by a display of apparent bulk. But the issue is disappointing; only on three or four occasions have we seen battle actually joined, and then the scuffle only lasted a few seconds.

It is, nevertheless, a magnificent spectacle to watch, perhaps, ten or a dozen of these huge game-birds, all "showing off" under the early rays of an April sun, and set off amidst the green corn and flower-spangled herbage —each as he slowly struts round, "echando la rueda," displaying alternately the swollen gorget and yellow-barred back, then the white underparts.

This state of affairs continues during March and into April; rehearsals, but no actions—at least we have seen none. The males really appear to show off rather one to another than to the females, which, though not far off, exhibit no more visible interest or concern than does our grey hen under similar circumstances. About the 20th of April the hen lays her two big greenish eggs amidst the growing corn, and disappears; but even this circumstance has no appreciable effect upon the other sex, who continue for weeks their complacent performances in spite of the fact that the females—for whose behoof these displays were presumably inaugurated—are no longer present to admire, as they have now commenced the duties of incubation.

During the earlier period of this courtship, and at the

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time when pairing presumably occurs, it is extremely rare to see a *single* male associated with a circle of females—as is the case with black game. Each band is composed of mixed sexes, females preponderating. We have often seen *two* males along with five or six females, but never *one* alone; another band consists of three males and seven females; a third of five and thirteen; a fourth of ten and thirty, males and females respectively; but *none*, as just stated, are formed of a pair, or of a single male with his harem, as one would expect if the species were polygamous in the ordinary sense.

After incubation has commenced the males remain in separate packs during summer, and take no share in domestic duties.

Turning now to the Bustards of the *marisma*, we must first explain that there are no bustards in the marisma proper—*that* is the home of the Flamingo. But here, for the sake of convenience, we include the whole of the plains, some pasturage, some arable, which, *together with* the *marisma* proper, form the delta of the Guadalquivir; and especially those parts known as the Isla Mayor and

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Isla Menor, so-called "islands" formed by the triple channel of that great river.

These "islands" comprise vast areas of level pasturage—in winter bare of herbage, almost dry mud, but by April, knee-deep in richest grass and vegetation, resonant with the "whit-ti-wit" of unnumbered quail. On these flowery plains are reared some of the choicest breeds of the fighting bull—those, for example, of the Marques del Saltillo—which may here be admired at leisure.

The first point in the life-history of these Bustards of the marisma is their semi-migratory character. We do not mean to infer more than that they are *locally* migratory, shifting their ground according to season and food-supply, but not leaving the country or crossing any sea. Africa is the only country they could go to, but *Otis tarda* appears to be unknown, or at any rate very scarce, in Morocco and Algeria. Their migrations are confined to Spanish territory. In the middle of May, while ibex-shooting, we have observed a flight of seven Bustards in the heart of the Sierra de Ronda, passing high over those lofty peaks.

On these plains there are Bustard of one sex *or* the other (not always both) at all seasons. The males leave the pasturage for the corn in February and March, followed later by the females as the laying season approaches. Both sexes are then seen in mixed bands as above described—two or three up to a dozen males in each band composed of five or six times that number of females, but *never* in single pairs or a single male consorting with a female retinue.

Here also we have enjoyed watching, at sunrise, the imposing performances of the males—often five or six bands in view at once,* but, as before, without detecting any specific action—nothing beyond "show."

* Nowhere can these spectacles be witnessed with greater ease, or to better advantage, than on the Lower Guadalquivir, where, from the deck of our vessel, we have counted as many as forty or fifty *barbones* within easy reach of a field-glass. It is, however, only in the first hours of daylight that they are thoroughly "on view."

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The eggs are laid in the last week of April (we found two females, already sitting each on two eggs, on the 26th), and about mid-May the males disappear. To Africa they have gone, the local shooters aver; but this, we know, is not the case, and are far from sure that the missing males are not simply hidden amidst the vast stretches of corn, then near four feet high, pending their moult.

Bustards moult very severely, casting all quill-feathers (as wild geese do) almost simultaneously. Hence, at the end of May, they become for a time incapable of flight, and naturally, under such conditions, seek the utmost seclusion, perhaps deceiving people into the illusion that they had gone, when they are really simply in hiding, which the rank summer vegetation renders easy enough. After eggs are laid, the males certainly desert their mates entirely, forming themselves into bachelor coteries, and leaving to the female the entire burden of the nursery.

Bustards take two years or more to acquire maturity: the year-old males are hardly larger than adult females, possess neither ruff nor whiskers, and do not breed. They probably continue growing for three or four years, or even more. An old *barbon*, when winged and brought to bay, will turn and attack its aggressor, hissing savagely and uttering a low guttural bark, "Wuff! wuff!" Except on such occasions we have not heard any vocal sound from a Bustard; nor do they, when winged, ever attempt to escape by running.

Though the general habit of the Bustard is graminivorous—his food consisting of the green corn, both blades and shoots, of grain and green herbage of all kinds, yet in summer, when the corn is cut, he develops for a time a keenly carnivorous character, catching and swallowing whole the rats and mice which, at that season, swarm on the stubbled plain, as well as the young of ground-breeding birds, buntings, larks, &c. Nor is a reptile wholly despised—a small snake or green lizard is readily included in his menu, and at all seasons they are very fond of insects, especially grasshoppers and locusts.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LITTLE BUSTARD.

(OTIS TETRAX.)

WHILE the Great Bustard takes chief place amongst the game-birds of Europe, both as regards size and sporting qualities, his smaller relative, the Little Bustard—in Spanish, *Sison*—must certainly head the list of the wily and unapproachable.

Against the Great Bustard, watchful as he is, fair measures can successfully be brought to bear, but no skill that we know of—none, that is, of legitimate sporting kind—will avail against the *Sison*. We may at once classify him as the most difficult of all game-birds to bring to bag. That he is frequently shot is no disproof of this assertion. The birds being abundant, it would be strange indeed if none fell "haphazard" to chance shots when the sportsman is in pursuit of other game.

The habits of the Little Bustard are, in general, much the same as those of the larger species. They frequent, in the main, the same ground; the young are reared amidst the security of the ripening corn; in autumn they form into packs or bands, and spend their days upon the open plain.

We have not, however, met with these birds on the dead-level plains, so attractive to the *Abutarda*, and their preference is undoubtedly for more undulated lands. We have observed them as far up as corn grows on the foot-hills of the sierra.

In the month of April the Little Bustards are *all paired*, differing in this respect from the free-loving (?) *Otis tarda*.

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The males have now acquired the banded throats, and indulge in love-antics, much after the fashion of the blackcock. Far away on the prairie one's eye catches something white, which disappears and again appears. On focussing the field-glass upon the distant object it is seen to be a male *Sison*, which, with drooping wings and expanded tail, slowly revolves on his axis. Now he rises to full height, displaying all the white on his plumage; anon his breast seems depressed to earth, and all the while a strange bubbling note is uttered, monosyllabic, but repeated in rapid spondees.*

In vain one scans the surrounding ground to catch a glimpse of the female; she remains crouched among the scant growth of palmetto, or rough herbage, invisible: yet, we may presume, admiring the "play" of her lord.

Not yet have the sentiments of love overmastered those of self-preservation: hence an attempt to gain closer quarters will be unsuccessful, the male bird rising on clattering wing at three gunshots, his partner following soon after. He has not yet, moreover, attained the fullest beauty of his nuptial plumage. By the middle of May his banded throat, with its double gorget of black and white, has become distended like a jargonelle pear, the rich glossy-black plumes at the back long and hackle-like. At this period—end of May—the males may be secured by careful approach under the stalking-horse. And now the females, already beginning to lay, become, of course, tame enough.

The four olive-green eggs are deposited among the herbage at the end of May—four is the number we have seen in the few nests discovered—and a second clutch is, according to Mr. Saunders (who, we have found by experience, makes no statement unless he has good grounds for it), frequently laid in the latter part of July. The males, all through the tedious business of incubation,

* Col. Irby gives this love-note as "*prut, prut.*" Mr. Howard Saunders describes the rising and falling movement as more of a *jump*, which may very likely be a more correct definition; or, perhaps, both actions are executed. At the distance at which observations are possible, it is difficult to be quite certain what one sees.

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remain hard by, ever constant to their sitting partners, and not "packing" or deserting them, as is the wont of their less faithful cousins, *Otis tarda*. Not till the young are on the wing are the *Sisones* seen again in packs. This marked difference of habit between congeneric species so closely allied as the two Bustards is very curious.

Possessed of keen powers of eye and ear, combined with the strongest ideas of self-preservation all round, the Little Bustard is never—in a sporting season—surprised in covert. His favourite haunts are in rough country, where he has every opportunity of remaining

LITTLE BUSTARDS—MAY.

concealed himself, while yet able to survey all that passes for a wide radius around. Rarely does one descry a band of these birds *on the ground*. The loud rattle of wings as a pack springs 200 yards away is usually the first intimation of their presence. If, by some lucky chance, they are seen on the ground, even then the tactics employed to secure the larger bustard, namely, by ambushing the guns in a half-circle on their front, and driving the birds towards them, seldom, very seldom, come off. The *Sisones* almost invariably take flight, from some un-

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explained cause—their extreme shyness and acute senses of sight and hearing are the only explanation—before the guns and drivers have reached their respective points. Or, even if the pack is enclosed within the deadly circle, they will still sometimes manage to escape by springing up high in air, and passing out at impossible altitudes.

During the fiery heats of summer these birds may be shot by the artifice of the bullock-cart—already described in the chapter on Great Bustard—or be exhausted by repeated flights; but neither of these plans possess the merits of really attractive sport, while the second involves hard work under a heat that few men can stand.

There are, however, times when the Little Bustard may be secured upon easier lines. Upon occasion, in autumn, they become so enamoured of certain spots, beguiled by the plentiful supply of grain scattered around the *eras*, or levelled threshing-grounds out in the open field, that, like greedy blackcocks on a Northumbrian stubble, they "take a haunt" (*toman la querencia*), and allow themselves, evening after evening, to be surprised and shot. This, however, is not a regular habit as with the blackcocks, but rather an exceptional case.

Standing, partially concealed by my horse, near one of these *eras*, on one occasion a band of Little Bustards passed so near and in such close order that three brace fell to the two barrels. On another memorable autumn afternoon I bagged, under similar conditions, eight of these bustards, besides four of the larger kind, the former all shot as they flew in at dusk towards an open threshing-ground.

The sportsman on the plains is frequently apprised of a passing band of Little Bustards by the peculiar hissing sound made by their wings in flight, different from that of any other bird, but most resembling the rustle of the Golden-eye; but they are rarely so confiding as to pass within shot. The birds seen in the markets are, however, obtained, in nine cases out of ten, at such chance moments.

In conclusion, we repeat, that whilst against every other

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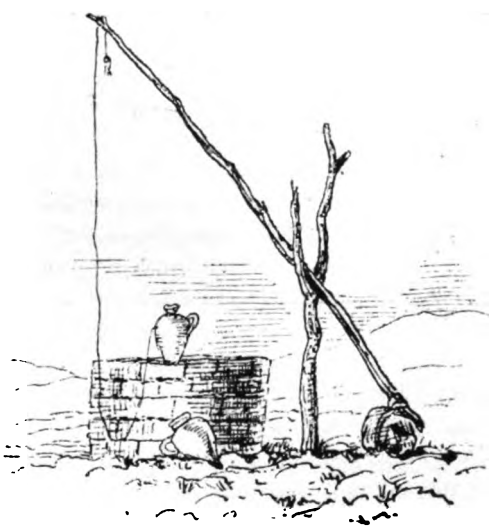
game-bird we know there is some ordered plan of campaign available, yet all efforts to outmatch the astute *Sison* are vain, and end in vexation of spirit. He is a bird, as the Spanish put it, of very *unsympathetic* nature ("muy antipatico") towards the fowler, and this is the more to be regretted as his flesh is of fine pheasant-like flavour.



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CHAPTER XXXII.

A WINTER CAMPAIGN IN DOÑANA.

(NOVEMBER.)

On a bright November forenoon we embarked from the weed-girt jetty at Bonanza on a big falucha, manned by four sun-bronzed watermen, and in whose spacious storage lay a pile of sporting impedimenta—guns and rifles, baggage, bedding, and the rest.

We were a party of eight—English and Spanish nationalities equally represented — and old acquaintances, associated in many branches of sport. All had come some distance to the rendezvous—some from Seville and Madrid, two from England—to pass a couple of weeks at the historic preserves of Southern Spain, the Coto de Doña Ana. As the swarthy crew let fall their oars into the tide of Guadalquivir, all eyes turned eagerly to the opposite shores, so full of pleasant reminiscences. 'Tis pleasant, too, to know that as the moorings are cast loose we lose touch of the world and its civilization; we leave behind us post and telegram, thought and care, and, with them, perhaps, some measure of ease and luxury—from all these things the broad flood of Bœtis and leagues of trackless waste will now divide us; we are free to revert to primæval savagery, and we greatly rejoice thereat. Amidst these happier thoughts arose just a qualm of speculation as to whether all the multifarious arrangements incidental to such campaigns had been duly fulfilled, and if we should find our people, horses and mules, awaiting us at the appointed tryst.

The mid-day sun was now lighting up the scene after a morning of mist and rain; to the left lay the town of San Lucar, with its ancient castle looming above the white

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Plate XXXIX. A SPANISH JUNGLE--THE ANGOSTURAS. Page 348.

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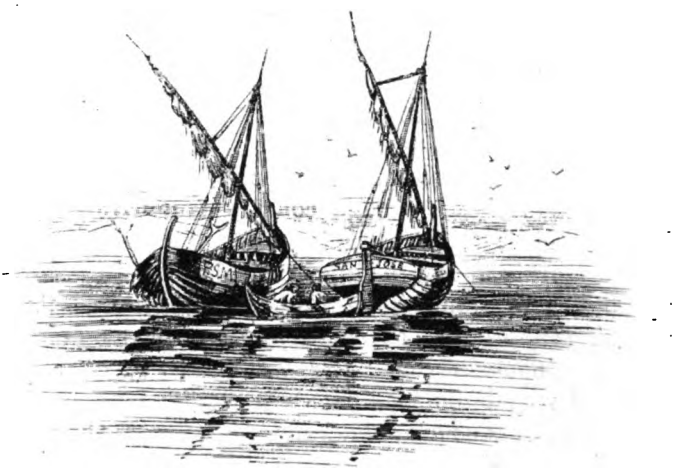
crenellated walls and spacious bodegas, and the busy strand of Bonanza, celebrated by Cervantes in *La Ilustre Fregona* as a rendezvous for ruffians, smugglers, and pirates. On the stream floated craft of many descriptions, from the London steamer receiving her cargo of manzanilla at the wharf to the falucha-rigged "ariels" and lumbering fishing-sloops—vessels not unlike the caravels in which, four centuries ago, Columbus set sail from the neighbouring port of Palos to discover a New World, when

"A Castilla y á Leon
Nuevo Mundo dió Colon."



The river at this point, close to its confluence with the sea, has a width of two miles, but the long lateen-sail, bellying out before a gentle *poniente*, bore us rapidly to the silent strand, where our horses stood awaiting us under a giant pine. No short time was spent in landing baggage, for the falucha lay aground a stone's throw from the shore; but at length all was landed, stowed in the mule-packs, and we set out on the long ride.

It had been intended to have one "drive" this afternoon, but these delays, and the customary tardiness of Spanish trains and travel generally, frustrated this plan,

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and it was already dark ere the head of our cavalcade sighted the welcome light displayed from the turrets of the ancient shooting lodge of Doñana. Though now in a state of partial ruin, the old Palacio still shows signs of former grandeur, and has been, in bygone days, a favourite sporting retreat for more than one Spanish king. As we approached its glimmering lights amidst the darkness of a November evening, the resonant *konk, konk! kerronk, kerronk!* of the wild geese, the mournful cries of plover and curlew, and the startled splash of wild ducks, are evidence of its lonely marsh-girt site and prophetic of sport to come.

Around the pile of logs cheerily blazing in the spacious hearth we gather, relieved to find that all the transport and commissariat arrangements had this time come off without a hitch—no slight matter where everything, from a lemon or a hen's egg to a portable bath, from a match to a mattress, has to be transported on mule-back the whole forty miles of rough country (and river) we had just travelled. Our Gallician cook and steward, half sportsman, half Bohemian, had come on two days in advance, and strangers were agreeably surprised to find anything to eat—except perhaps stewed lynx or fricasseed flamingo—in this outer wilderness. Then, as we gathered round the blazing hearth, enjoying such coffee and *breva* cigars as are only combined in Spain, the keepers come in with their reports—keepers of a different type to British ideals, Bartolo, Larrios, and Manolo, copper-skinned, pelt-clad and unkempt, and Trujillo, the *guarda mayor*, who enters with lordly salaam, his jacket hung on one great shoulder as on a peg—a picture of Cervantes' Quixote. These are four of the ten keepers who, from father to son, have occupied the posts on the property for generations.

The intention was to devote the first few days to the small game of the adjacent plains, but our first operation in the morning was a deer-drive. This, however, proved blank, for, though several were seen—five stags breaking back—none, except a few hinds and one *bareta*, or yearling stag, whose incipient horns (hardly longer than his ears)

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Plate XI. PALACIO DE DOÑANA. Page 350.

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were not distinguished by the gun past whom he broke, came forward to the shooting line. The writer's position was on the crest of a sand-ridge, with only the covert of a dead cistus bush: nothing, however, tested his powers of concealment except a few partridge and a pack of stone-plovers. The sandy glen which the post commanded was, nevertheless, plentifully tracked over by deer, and three wild pigs had passed inwards into the covert that morning.

After this beat, shot-cartridges were substituted for ball, and for the rest of that day and several following ones *caza menor* was the order of the day. The system of small-game shooting adopted on these plains combines both walking up and driving at the same time, and requires a few words of description. It must be borne in mind that we always have on one side of us—towards the north and east—the marisma, practically at this season an inland sea, and upon this circumstance the system is based. The plan of campaign consists in driving the game down upon the marisma; a line of eight, ten or twelve guns each 100 or 150 yards apart, and with several beaters placed in the interval, is formed at a distance of three or four miles inland. This line occupies upwards of a mile in length, and as it advances towards the marisma, obviously encloses whatever game may be concealed in three or four square miles of country, the greater part of which (the game) has a fair chance of coming in the way of one point or another of the line of guns. Some care is needed to preserve the formation of the beat, which is done by mounted keepers, who also see that the "points" or wings are thrown slightly in advance.

Presently there occurs an obstacle; already we have waded through some wettish spots; but how is it possible to cross this broad lagoon? On the right a *mancha*, one of those thickets of tree-heath and brooms, all interlaced with thorny briars, bars the way: these *manchas* are impenetrable—we have proved this—save to the wild boar or the badger. In the other direction the water stretches far —we can see the mounted beaters already splashing through it. In England one does not walk through river, lake, or pond merely because it lies in one's course, but

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this is not England, and as, after all, the bottom is sound and moderately level, if one can keep the cartridges dry, the sun will soon dry the rest.

The density of the scrub varies also: sometimes for a short distance one has to push through thickets where every step is a struggle with hard dried cistus stems, and where broken ground, ravines and thorny jungle make perspiration flow, and ill conduce to taking those smart chances that offer overhead at inopportune moments.

To a northerner it is hard to believe that it is mid-winter while almost every tree remains leaf-clad, and the brushwood all green and flower-spangled. Arbutus, rosemary and tree-heath (*Erica arborea*) are already in bloom; while bees buzz in the shoulder-high heather, and suck honey from its tricoloured blossoms—pink, purple and violet. Strange flies and winged creatures of many sorts and sizes, from gnat and midge to savage dragon-flies, rustle and drone in one's ear, or poise on iridescent wing in the sunlight, and the hateful hiss of the mosquito mingles with the insect-melody. Over each open flower of rock-rose or cistus hovers the humming-bird hawk-moth, with here and there one of the larger sphinxes (*S. convolvuli*), each with his long proboscis inserted deep in the tender calix. Not even the butterflies are entirely absent. We have noticed several gorgeous species at Christmas-time, including the painted lady and red admiral, the southern wood-argus, Bath white and clouded yellow, with *Lycœna telicanus*, *Thäis polyxena*, *Megœra*, and many more. On the warm sand bask pretty green and spotted lizards, apparently asleep, in the sunshine, but all alert to dart off on slightest alarm, disappearing like a thought in some crevice among the roots of the cistus.*

Gradually, as the line approaches the flat shores of the marisma, the "driving" shots increase in number and

* It may be appropriate here to add that the curious chamæleon, which is found nowhere else in Europe, is abundant in this district. It is not, however, seen in mid-winter. Another remarkable reptile is the lobe-footed gecko (*Platydactylus muralis*), which swarms about rocks and old walls. Both the reptiles and insects of Spain would probably richly repay further research.

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Plate XLI. BREAKFAST-TIME—DOÑANA. Page 352.

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the cry of *pájaro*, the Spanish equivalent to "mark over," becomes incessant. *Pajaró, pajaró*, the magic word comes borne on the breeze from right and left, dwelt on by the Andaluz till the final "ó" dies away in prolonged cadence; and there, far away ahead, appear sundry dark specks in the sky, rapidly growing in size as the redlegs wheel back towards the spot where we crouch behind a lentiscus. Now they are overhead, for two brief seconds within reach of a well-directed aim—then, in happy moments, a brace of redlegs will bounce on the bents.

Here every little thicket or clump of brushwood holds some of the birds that have been driven forward, and even on the barest ground some have found refuge behind a tuft of grass or palmetto. Everywhere partridges start up from the slightest covert, and one sees them running forward ere they rise. But the hottest work occurs in the belt of rush and reed—in the *juncos* that border the marisma. The finale is short, but it is sweet, and the man who has stopped handsomely the rocketers that sped to his lot has a reputation ready made.

Such is, in outline, the system of an *avero*, several of which can be carried out on a winter's day.

The partridges, unwilling to run save among the scrub, usually rise at longish range on bare patches, and mount rapidly in air, their flight rather resembling that of black-game than of our grey partridge, and as they wheel back fast and high, and at all angles, they test the best skill of the gunner. Besides partridge and rabbits, an odd pair of mallards will often rise from some rushy hollow, and from the drier reeds a quail or two spring with their smart game-like dash. The small Andalucian bush-quail (*Turnix sylvatica*) is occasionally shot, and crossing the more open ground, among short scrub of tamarisk and juniper, a few hares will be added to the bag. These are of the small southern race, *Lepus mediterraneus*, weighing only five or six pounds, more brindled in colour and with warmer shades on shoulders and flanks than ours. One of them being hemmed in, was this afternoon swimming a shallow pool when she attracted the attention of a Southern

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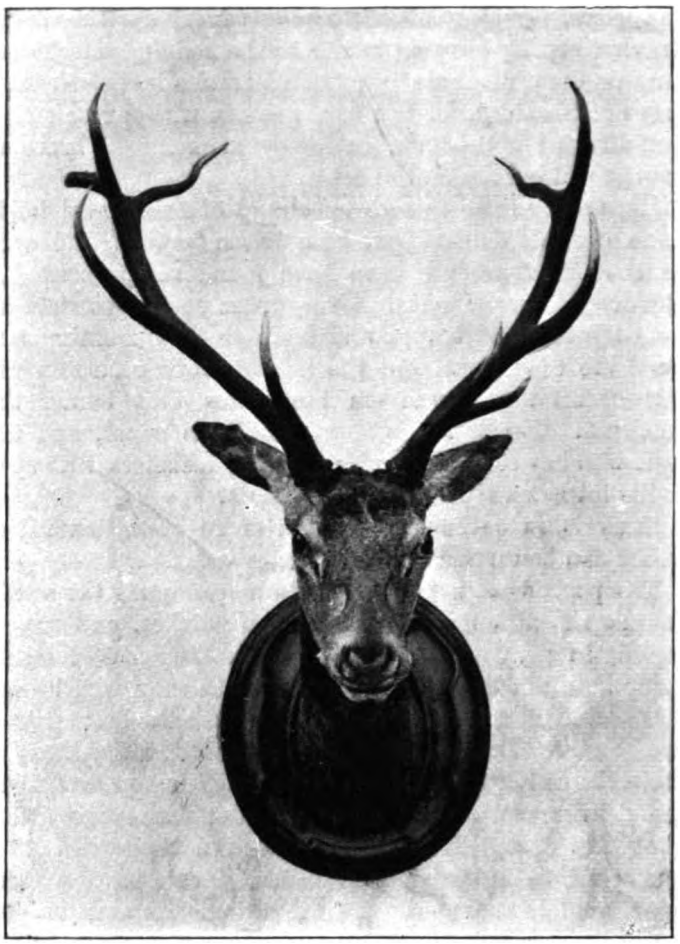
Peregrine falcon (*Falco punicus*) which was waiting on the partridge in front of our line. This falcon had already made several fine stoops at the flying game, all unsuccess-



A ROYAL HEAD—DOÑANA.

fully, when the sight of a hare in difficulties brought him overhead, and, in the act of poising, a double shot laid both low.

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After two or three days with the small game, it was decided to give the deer a turn. The sun shone brightly as we rode out to the ground selected for the day's sport, and a gentle breeze blew from a favourable direction. The first beat, nevertheless, proved blank—only hinds passing through the line, which served to give us, for a moment, a flutter of excitement as they crashed through the underwood, and dashed away at redoubled speed. On the next drive several stags were seen—some broke back, but three ran the gauntlet of our line at different points, offering good opportunities to three of our guns, two of which,

DEAD LYNX.

however, were not accepted. The third hart was stopped in the midst of a last bound by a clean rifle-shot at long range—a fine head of twelve tines.

The guns were next placed along a line of gigantic clumps of bulrushes which extended for miles with narrow glades, and thick, matted jungle between. This beat resulted successfully: seven shots were fired, two deer escaped, but two deer and two boars were killed. A curious incident also occurred with a lynx: the beast was evidently wounded by a lucky rifle-shot, and presently, the

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dogs ran her to bay in a neighbouring *mancha*. Here one of us who had fired the first shot followed, when, coming unexpectedly upon her in a narrow opening, the lynx being enclosed between man and dogs, made a desperate spring to pass by; the writer, in stepping aside, tripped and fell prostrate on his back, right under the furious beast—never did man rise more promptly! luckily without a scratch, and the next moment the lynx lay gasping out its life on the sand.

After this beat rifles were exchanged for smooth-bores, a line formed, and we shot our way back to the lodge, securing some twenty brace of partridge and other small game, besides another stag, which, all too drowsy, had permitted our line to advance too near ere he sprang from his lair. Shot was quickly exchanged for ball, and as the hart ran broadside on and within one hundred yards of two guns, he was struck in three places, and the dogs soon pulled him down. This was a very old beast, but only carried eight points, the "bay" antlers being entirely wanting, and the double-tops curiously bent inwards. This small-game beat having brought us to the verge of the marisma, we finished a successful day's sport with an hour's flight-shooting, during which five geese and nearly fifty teal and wigeon were brought to bag. The day's results were thus:—4 stags, 2 boar and a lynx, 23½ brace small game, and 54 head of wildfowl.

This evening there was performed the time-honoured ceremony of crowning with the laurel a neophyte in *caza mayor*. Dark-eyed Petra, the recognized belle of a region where it must be admitted that rivals were few, headed the motley procession of guards, beaters, and miscellaneous folk from the lower regions, and gracefully invested the blushing brows of Santiago, who knelt before her, with a chaplet of flowering arbutus. Then the loving cup passed round, and each drank to the health of the fair donor and the wearer of the crown. There followed a scene of festivity and ordered revels. The spacious court-yard was lit up by a blazing bonfire, and in its lambent light danced stalwart figures arrayed in the picturesque costume of

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rural Andalucia, while maiden forms alternately revolved and pirouetted in graceful minuet or fandango, keeping time to the guitar, and each accompanying her own movements with the castanets. We were told that a trio of brunettes had travelled the long four leagues from the

GROUP OF FOREST-GUARDS.

hamlet of Rocio to our lonely quarters to join the festive scene, but felt too much flattered by the compliment to inquire if such was really the case.

The revelry continued till far on in the night, but for all that, a faithful few were taking a hasty cup of coffee at

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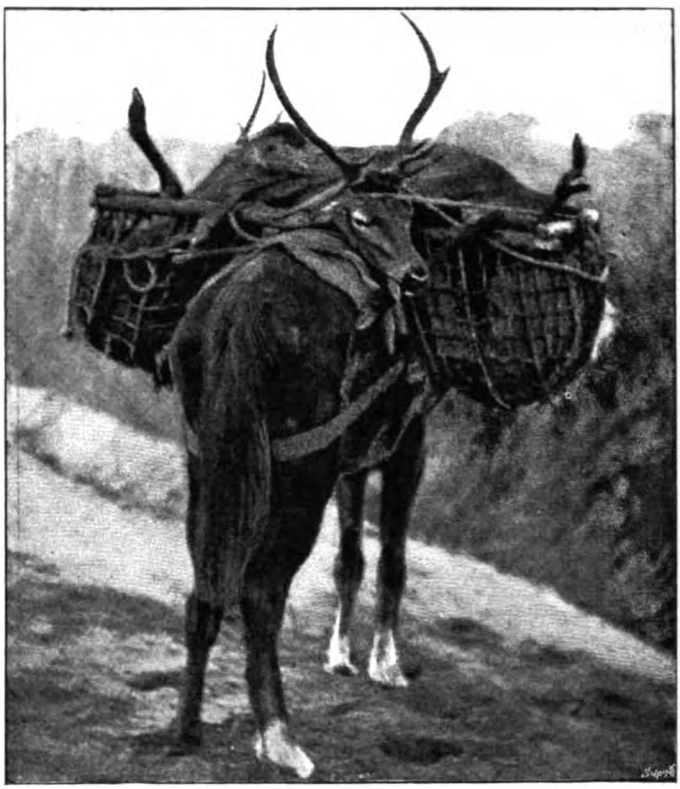
5 A.M. preparatory to an early attack on the greylags. A strong west wind howled across the waste, whistling through the cracks of roof and rickety window-frames—favourable omens—and before the sun rose we were far out in the marsh, lying concealed on the furthest projecting points of dry land. Then, as the approaching dawn set



PANNIER-PONY AND GAME.

the wildfowl in motion, the half-lit skies were serried with hurrying files, and the cold air resounded with the cries of the various ducks and geese. Our luck this morning was hardly so good as expected, but four guns brought in 7 geese, 21 teal, and 8 mallards.

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This day again proved a lucky one—several deer and a lynx, besides minor game, being piled on the panniers of the carrier-ponies before night. The lynx was a specially handsome beast, an old male with bushy whiskers, his tawny pelt boldly splashed with dark spots. He was killed by a rifle-ball when going at top speed across a glade. The writer's mind that evening was, nevertheless, tinged with regret. While posted as "point-gun," amidst some lovely but very broken forest ground at a remote *corral*, I observed an object move slightly among some young pine-scrub in a hollow on my front. It was the antlers of a stag; and soon, by the forest of ivory tips, I perceived they belonged to a hart of no ordinary degree. Presently the owner emerged from the covert and for several seconds stood, fully exposed, at 100 yards, an enormous beast, looking as black as coal against a background of dead yellow flags. He presented a certain shot; but, alas! was still *within the beat;* and though the stag stood in a slight hollow where rising ground behind rendered the shot perfectly safe, I hesitated to break the rules, and the chance was lost—the grand beast going away wide to the right. The vision of that stag, with his broad and branching head and unnumbered points, his massive frame and glossy coat, haunted me awake and asleep that night and for many another.

A few weeks afterwards, when "still-hunting" with a single Spanish companion in the same district, we came somewhat unexpectedly (it was only 4 P.M.), on a stag quietly splashing through a marsh-belt that separated two patches of forest. The beast was more than half a mile off; but on reaching the place after a detour, we observed him standing under the shade of some trees 400 yards distant. On putting the glass on him, to my intense joy, I recognized my old friend of a month ago—there he stood flicking at the flies, the *black stag* beyond a shadow of doubt! A nearer direct approach was not possible; but José suggested that by going round in a wide circuit and giving the stag his wind, he would probably move him my way. This manœuvre we proceeded to carry out, and in half an hour's time I had the satisfaction of observing the

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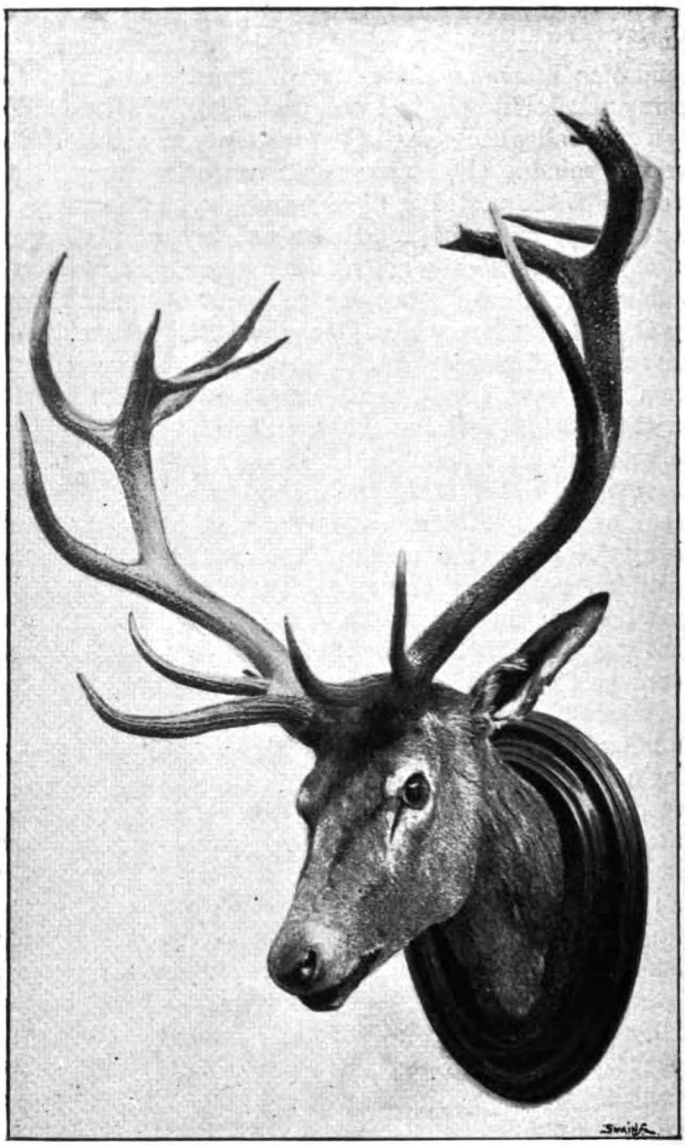
great beast's first signs of suspicion. He had, meanwhile,



SPANISH RED DEER—A MOUNTAIN-HEAD FROM MORENA.

laid down; now he rose and moved uneasily away, stopping

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and sniffing alternately. Then he seemed to have made up his mind, turned deliberately, and slowly trotted in my direction. José had managed the business in a masterly way—never showing. Already the stag had reached a long range shot, when from the nearer, opposite, covert dashed five hinds, which came splashing through the water, right between me and the big stag. How persistently those confounded hinds interposed their useless bodies right between the foresight and its mark! Already the black hart was within thirty yards of the water's edge and the shelter of the forest; when, for a few moments, I got a clear view of his broadside at rather long range, took a full sight with the 100-yard flap up, and fired. Thud! went the conical Paradox ball right on the point of his shoulder, and he pitched forward, stone-dead, in the water. It was a pretty shot, well placed, though rather high, breaking the spine close below the withers. Such shots are, of course, instantly fatal; but are too risky to *try for*, since they come within an inch or two of a clean miss!

There is a degree of mental gratification in occasionally "pulling off" shots of this kind—that is, in killing *clean* with ball a large animal in full career, and at long distance —that must probably be experienced to be appreciated. And, after all, how much is due to the marvellous precision and power of modern sporting weapons! This stag carried sixteen points, and his horns measured along the curve 32 inches, with a sweep of 28 inches. In weight he probably exceeded any we have shot on the Spanish plains, and his rich velvety pile was conspicuously dark and glossy.

One other incident, with a moral: towards the end of one campaign an afternoon was devoted to burning the *carrizales*, or bamboo-brakes, which in places form belts of jungle, extending over several miles, and afford secure harbour for various wild animals, including, occasionally, deer. These places, owing partly to the impervious nature of the covert and partly to the quicksands and quaking bogs with which the jungle is interspersed, cannot be traversed: hence the only effectual means of driving out the game which may lie within their shelter is by fire.

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The writer, to-day, though the first gun in line, was posted some half a mile back from the commencement of the beat, and was endeavouring to make a hasty sketch of the beautiful landscape of cane-brake, bamboo, and marsh-land which stretched away before us. The dry sedges and canes were fired at several points: but hardly had the distant smoke-wreaths begun to curl upwards in the clear still air, than a first-rate stag slowly trotted across the open, right before me. I had not seen him come; the sketch-book was in hand; the gun—loaded in *both* barrels with shot, for cats and the like—lay on the ground; truly a magnificent bungle! One ball-cartridge was inserted ere the game, still unconscious of an ambush, was passing, full broadside, at 80 or 90 yards—as easy a shot as need be wished. But in the flurry of unreadiness, I forgot to raise the sight, and the ball passed immediately beneath the breast, missing both forelegs. Again a cartridge had to be changed; and now the stag was bounding away, end-on, at 150 yards. This time the aim was refined and nerves braced by a very sense of shame, and the impact of the ball was distinctly, though faintly, heard. On went the stag, disappearing over rising ground behind, and hardly had the cartridges been replaced, than a second hart, breaking back, offered a long and infinitely more difficult shot; but, after one vertical bound, like that of a lightly-hooked salmon, dropped stone-dead in his tracks. Soon afterwards a small stag with three hinds showed on the outer edge of the jungle; but, though more than one express rifle was levelled at him, the distance was too great (300 or 400 yards), and the bullets uselessly ricochetted across the swampy wastes. Towards the end, two wild-cats bounded from the fringe of burning bamboos, and simultaneous shots stretched both lifeless among the tamarisks.

The spectacle from our posts was remarkable, the whole area, many hundred acres, enveloped in smoke; here and there tongues of flame shot upwards as the flying sparks carried forward the conflagration across some marsh-channel and renewed the dying blaze. Dense black clouds rolled away to leeward, amidst which hovered swarms of

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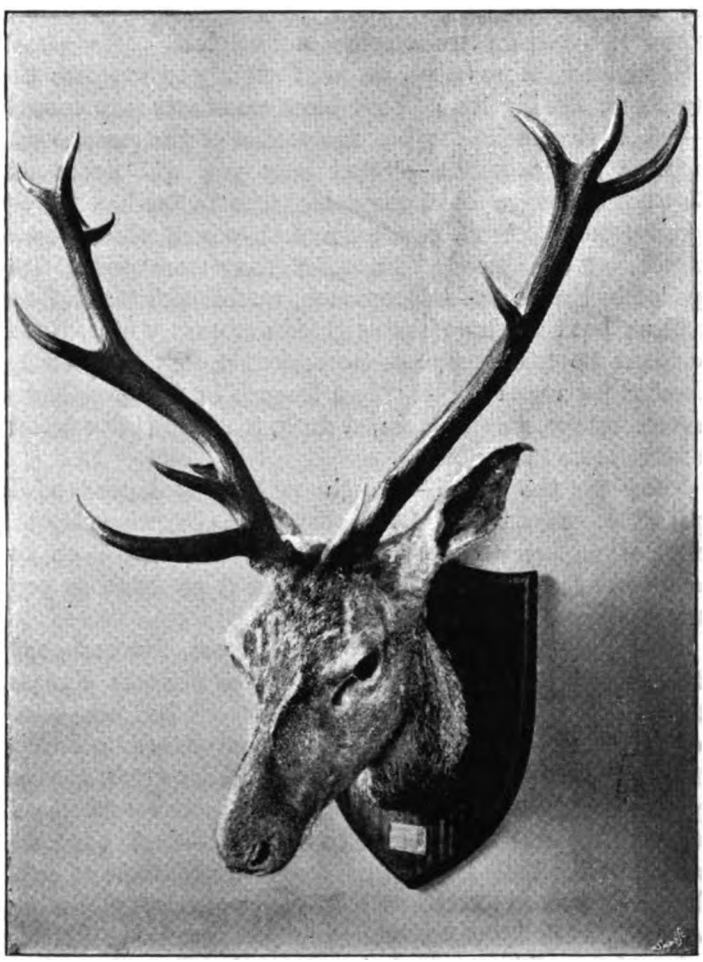
swallows and insect-feeding birds with an outer fringe of kites, kestrels and magpies, all preying on belated locusts and coleoptera. Legions of mice—common house-mice,



A STAG OF THIRTEEN POINTS.

as far as we could judge—with land- and water-rats, fled from the fiery jungle; here and there a grizzly mongoose

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hurried off up the sloping dune; otters, genets and badgers were seen at various points, while coots and bitterns, rails, crakes, and waterhens flapped about, half-dazed with fright. Over the smoking brakes swept buzzards and marsh-harriers which, forgetting their fears in opportunity, pounced boldly on the homeless and helpless.

As soon as it was over, we went eagerly to examine the tracks of the big stag. Yes! blood was there sure enough —whole streams of it; but the verdict of the *guardas* was prompt and emphatic—"that stag you will never get. See! the blood is all at one side. The bullet has merely grazed his off-flank, causing a flesh-wound which bleeds much, but does no vital harm." They were right. Impelled by shame and self-reproach, we followed the trail for miles; but though we twice sighted our quarry afar, it was evident he had sustained no serious injury, and as he headed for a wild region where leagues of jungle afforded secure refuge, we were fain, at dusk, to acknowledge defeat, and to leave him in peace.

Now for the moral—though perhaps it hardly needs pointing. Never attempt to sketch, or otherwise play the fool, when every energy should be concentrated on the sport in hand. One thing well done is as much as poor mortals are capable of at one time.

Thus, amidst varied and abundant sport, fun and good-fellowship, amidst lovely scenes and a glorious climate, sped all too quickly those happy days in Doñana—some devoted to big game, some to small; on others we divided forces, one party going to the partridges, or quail, another preferring wildfowl; while those who had confidence in their skill with the rifle elected to *rastrear*—that is, to track a deer to his lair, following the *rastro*, or spoor, of some big hart, perhaps for leagues, across the broken plains and *corrales*, with only the uncertain prospect of a difficult, often impossible, snap-shot after all. But there is a reward in seeing the skill in woodcraft displayed by the Spanish *guardas*, who seem to diagnose by intuition the unfulfilled ideas and desires which, some hours previously, have been passing through the mind of the hart, whose

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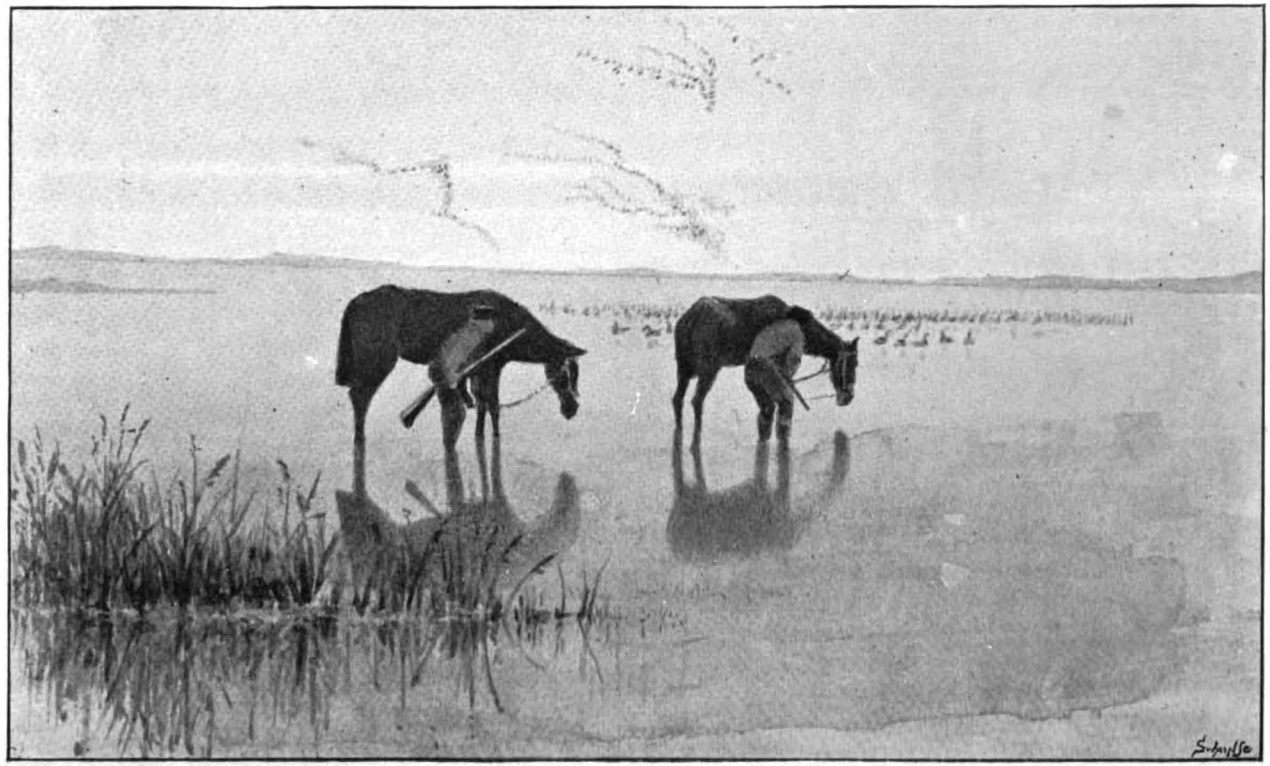

Plate XLII. SPANISH WILDFOWLERS WITH *CABRESTO* PONIES. Page 365.

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faint *rastro* they follow with the certainty and patience of a bloodhound. This is, however, a distinct branch of sport, to which we owe many a pleasant day on the South-Spanish plains, and a separate chapter is devoted to its description.

One day we tried a novel method of approaching the wildfowl on the shores of a lake which lay at a distance of three or four miles. This was by means of the *cabresto*, or decoy pony—a curious experience. The wildest waterfowl are at the mercy of a clever fowler provided with one of these ponies. As there are many half-wild mares pasturing at large over the swamps, the ducks are accustomed to the sight of them and take no alarm at their proximity. As we approached the lake, its flat sandy margin was in places black with wildfowl, while myriads sat on the surface, splashing and pluming themselves in the sunshine. With each of the three ponies went its owner, a *patero*, or professional wildfowl-shooter, each taking with him one of us—almost literally—"in tow," for, with one hand grasping the pony's tail, the other carrying the gun, we followed each close behind his *patero*, who directed the pony towards the thickly-covered shore. We proceeded thus, crouching behind the pony's quarters, till we had approached within 100 yards of the fowl. The leading *patero* now stopped his pony, which at once commenced to feed, an example followed by the rest—we six men sitting meanwhile on the grass. No alarm was shown by the ducks. A cord was now slipped over the neck of each *cabrestro* and made fast to its off foreleg above the knee, bringing the heads of the ponies close to the ground, thus giving them the appearance of grazing, though in truth we were now on bare dry mud. We continued approaching thus, and the interval was now reduced to fifty yards; looking beneath the ponies we could see hundreds of ducks all playing themselves in fancied security. There, close at hand, sat or swam wigeon and mallards, shovelers, garganeys, teal and pintails, a few gadwall and several of the curious heavy-headed "porrones" (*Erismatura mersa*), with diving-ducks and

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grebes of many kinds. The nearer shore was massed with teal, and a few yards beyond a big pack of mallards were daintily pluming themselves. As the teal came first in line, it was to them we directed our attention: with alternate progression and feigned halts to "graze" we continued our slow advance. We were now within twenty-five yards of the teal: already a movement of preparation had been made by the leading gun, instantly imitated by the two who followed, when a tremendous scare took place among the wildfowl, and the whirr of wings threw the whole lake into confusion. A kite had swept across the birds, and all had taken to the refuge of the deep waters. "Paciencia," resignedly muttered our friends the *pateros*. We uncocked our guns and squatted on the mud, each under cover of his beast, thus spending an hour while the frightened fowl gradually swam ashore and reformed on the margin. A second time the moment to pull trigger had almost arrived when the tyrant again swept over with the same result as before. At last, however, the twice delayed moment arrived, and our six barrels drove together through the ranks of teal, leaving upwards of fifty dead or wounded on the shore, of which we ultimately bagged forty-four. This shot was taken against the wishes of our friends, who declared that had we waited an hour longer we should have had the birds thick enough to have killed three times that number. But we had other sport in view, and could not wait for this golden opportunity; besides, our rival the kite might have spoiled our game again. We had, however, seen enough to understand that one of these men and his sagacious auxiliary can really account for the almost fabulous number of ducks which they are said occasionally to obtain at a single shot. These men shoot for a living; hence they never fire except when they have made certain of a heavy shot. It is not at all unusual for them to manœuvre for a whole day without discharging their ancient fowling-pieces. They make the slowest approach, get to the closest quarters possible, and never unnecessarily disturb the fowl. When they *do* fire it is a bumper. In summer their

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Plate XLIII. A SHOT IN THE OPEN. Page 367.

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occupation is varied by fishing and catching leeches in the swamps, which they do by flogging the surface of the water, when the leeches fasten upon their legs. A trained *cabresto* pony, though a rough, shaggy little beast, is of considerable value to these men, among whom there exists a sort of brotherhood, and an intruder of their own class fares badly if he ventures into the lonely districts which they almost regard as their exclusive domain.*

At length the time for our departure had arrived, for we intended spending a few days among the big game in the extensive pine-forests which cover the southern extremity of the Coto Doñana. The pack-mules with the baggage being despatched by a direct route, we rode off on an almost summerlike morning, taking a wider course so as to get a "drive" of some of the wooded *corrales* that lay towards the west. Here, in one of the wildest spots, Manolo placed the line of guns. The writer is posted on a mound of blown sand, one of the many which form the irregular broken country around. The cocked rifle is placed conveniently for instant grasp while one surveys the position and speculates on the likeliest spot for a stag to appear—quickly taking note of the uneven ground, its hillocks and hollows where it will be necessary to enterprise a snap-shot, and again where more deliberate aim may be taken. Every here and there similar mounds present an unbroken view, spots where the driven sand has collected around some stalwart pine, taking various picturesque forms and crowned with the dark green foliage of latest growth.

Presently the sharp crack of a rifle breaks our reverie and gives startling evidence that game is afoot. A few seconds later the patter of galloping feet is heard on the hard sand and the expected quarry bounds across the glen, his antlers thrown back as he scents danger

* Since the above was written we have acquired the sporting rights over parts of these great marshes, and have engaged the worthy wildfowlers, Vasquez and Vergara, as keepers. Many pleasant days have we spent with them and their ponies. But of this sport a fuller account will be found in another chapter.

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and redoubles his speed. Full in the shoulder strikes the express bullet, stopping his flight and sending him headlong to earth, where a second shot ends his agony with

instant death. In this fortunate drive four stags and two boars are brought to bag. One of the latter, in a thick brambled *mancha*, for some time defied the dogs, which declined to face him at close quarters. He was a brute

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Plate XLIV. SALAVAR--A SKETCH IN A SPANISH *MANCHA*. Page 369.

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of unusual size, and each time he faced the dogs with gnashing tusks, they retired. At last a shot fired in the air dislodged him, and a quick rifle-shot took effect in his lower jaw. Again he sought refuge among the brambles, but the dogs now held the advantage, and inch by inch he was driven forward to a point where he offered an easy mark to several guns, and soon Manolo's long *navaja* was performing his obsequies. Another stag of thirteen points (*see* photo, p. 363), and a brace of foxes, right and left, were secured in a small isolated thicket just before dusk, and the last ten miles of our ride had thus to be managed in the dark.

One more incident before we leave these forests. Early on a winter morning we had reached the remote covert of Salavar, and owing to its extent, and the strong wind blowing, which would prevent the shots being heard, it was decided to drive it in two sections. At the end of the first beat, which had produced three stags—two lynxes also passing the line unscathed—the guns and drivers were assembled preparatory to the second (windward) *batida*, when, from that direction, a couple of distant gunshots were distinctly heard. Clearly poachers were at work, and already the forest-guards were conjecturing (and rightly as it proved) the personality of the depredator—an old offender who had before given trouble. The man penetrated to the heart of these wild regions accompanied only by his son, and his mode of procedure was to station himself to the leeward of any likely bit of covert, and sending the lad round, to await the chance of the latter driving forward any deer which might happen to be lying in it. His two shots had been at hinds. Leaving the main party to surround the *mancha*, two of the keepers galloped off in the direction of the shots, separating so as to enclose the poacher and cut off his retreat. Soon one of these came across the tracks of naked feet on the sand, and shortly overtook the culprit already preparing a drive of the covert we had just beaten. Taken by surprise, resistance or flight were impossible; the poacher's gun was taken from him, and

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he and his son marched off prisoners to our main party—an ill-looking ruffian clad in deer-skins, of whom some ugly tales were told. Brought before our friend representing the proprietary, the captive showed an undaunted and even impudent demeanour, asserting that it was the hunger of his children that had brought him from a village on the Guadiana (some fifty miles away), to kill the deer, which, he said, belonged to him equally with any other of God's creatures. Such primitive principles availed but little with these fierce keepers, imbued with almost feudal respect for forest-game, and this bold adherent of "commonwealth" was deprived of his gun and ordered off to the coast, with a warning that he would shortly have to answer for his conduct before the magistrate at Almonte. As he turned to obey, old Bartolo, whose estimate of the terrors of Spanish law evidently stood low, shouted after him, with a significant tap on the stock of his ancient *escopeta*, "Look here, Cristobal! you have given us a deal of trouble; you will come here once too often!"

It may occur to the reader to conjecture how the poacher could have utilized his deer, had he secured one, in so remote a spot. Far away on the distant boundary of the Coto, he had his donkey hidden in some thicket of lentiscus, and under cover of night would have returned for his spoils, and moving stage by stage to the sea-shore, would contrive to reach his village before daybreak. He was, however, securely caught, for within an hour another keeper arrived, who also had detected the trespasser's footprints at a point some ten miles away, and suspecting they were none of honest man, had followed the trail. Thus, even had Cristobal not been captured by us, he would still have been intercepted by this second adversary.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

WILDFOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS.

I.—A Wet Winter: A Record of Difficulties and Disappointments.

The wildfowl-shooting of the Peninsula in favourable seasons and situations is probably equal to any in Europe. But much depends on the place, and everything on the season. There are plenty of provinces and miles of marsh-land where the hardest work is barely rewarded by a pair or two of ducks, or perhaps five couple of snipe, and where many a long day will be registered blank. Then, as just stated, *everything* depends on the weather. For climatic conditions vary extremely as between one winter and another. Some Spanish winters are dry and rainless; hardly any moisture remaining save in certain favoured spots; and to these sparse green oases throng the aquatic hosts. Here, at such times, come the red-letter days for the fowler.

But Spanish winters are not always dry; on the contrary, it frequently happens that the rains set in in autumn with semi-tropical fury, converting this drainless land into one vast swamp, and inundating the *marismas* till they grow into inland seas. The difference between a wet and a dry winter is marvellous. We propose in this chapter to describe the somewhat indifferent sport of a *wet winter*, even in a good locality, together with its effect on the habits and distribution of wildfowl.

The winter of 1887–8 will serve as a typical example. In November the rain set in; during December it descended day after day, and by the end of the month the swollen

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flood of Guadalquivir had spread itself laterally over its low riparian terrain to a breadth of perhaps sixty miles of unbroken water. Miniature breakers dashed up against the leeward shores; the marsh lands which border the marisma were submerged, and the whole delta, extending to Seville, was under water. From the moment we beheld that tawny expanse, it was clear that all hope of success in wildfowling enterprise must be abandoned. It is not so much that in a wet season wildfowl are less abundant (for they are there in thousands), as that they are scattered over so vast an area, instead of being concentrated at certain spots, which explains the difficulty of their pursuit and the impossibility of securing any large numbers.

Riding along the shores of this inland sea, we observed numerous packs of wildfowl floating on its surface, but always at such a distance from the shore as to be inaccessible by the ordinary Spanish system of the stalking-pony. The *cabresto* is only available when ducks are found in shallow water or in comparatively narrow channels where the ponies can be worked round them till the fowlers gradually bring their masked batteries to bear. But now, with the whole country submerged, it was impossible to concentrate the fowl, and our efforts were generally directed against scattered packs, nearly always on the edge of perfectly open water. Instead of being able, by manœuvring at a little distance, gently to move forward the outside birds, to close up the ranks, and thus to gather together a compact body upon which to direct our broadside, we had now to deal with loosely-scattered parties dotted here and there for miles along what was practically an open shore, and which simply swam away from us into deeper water. Then, in this deeper water, the deception naturally lost great part of its efficacy; for though the sight of a half-wild pony grazing in shallow marsh where grass and water-plants rise above the surface, has no terror for the duck tribe, yet the case is obviously altered when the pony is directed into open water, devoid of all signs of vegetation, and reaching up to his belly! No

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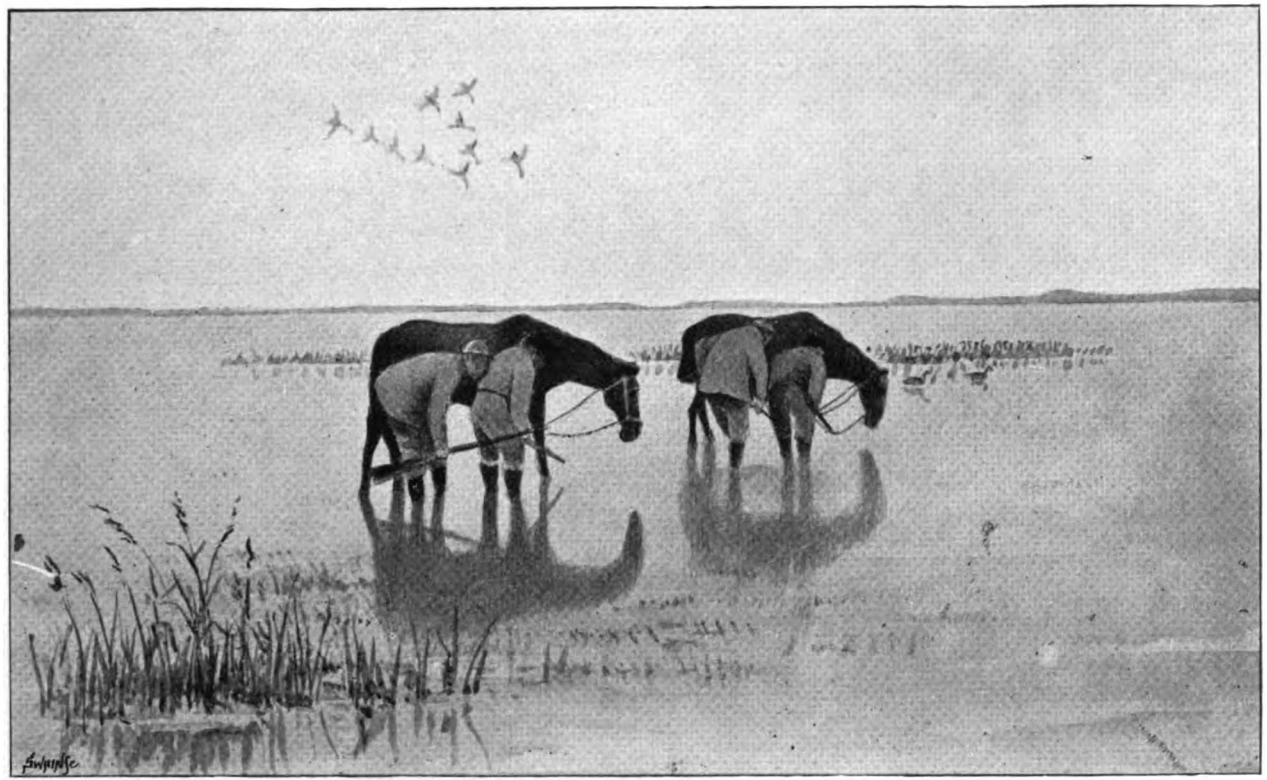

Plate XLV. WILDFOWLING WITH *CABRESTOS*. No. 1.—THE APPROACH. Page 372.

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sensible beast would ever seek such "pasturage," and the anomaly is quickly detected by the ducks.

There were, however, abundance of wildfowl; some of the aggregations of pintails, indeed, were a memorable sight, darkening acres of water, and in the upper marisma we occasionally enjoyed a degree of success which would undoubtedly have been gratifying but for loftier anticipations. Riding along the marshy margins at daybreak, tempting chances at twenties and thirties offered themselves, but our *pateros* would not hear of our disturbing the wastes for such paltry lots—"*veinte ó treinta pares al primer tiro*" (twenty or thirty couples at the first shot) was their constant refrain; but sometimes the results belied their judgment, and more than once before night we regretted those matutinal scruples. On more fortunate days we did succeed in working our way into the midst of such assemblages of ducks as it rarely falls to the lot of wildfowler to see at close quarters all around him. It is necessary, as a general rule, to keep to leeward of wildfowl; but with the *cabrestos* this is of less importance, and owing to their numbers and the straggling area of their phalanxes, it often happened that we had considerable bodies of duck almost under our lee and actually appeared to be in the midst of them. Not even in a gunning-punt can such opportunities of observation of wild creatures be enjoyed; for, then, one is necessarily lying prone, with eyes barely raised above water-level; here, merely crouching behind a shaggy little pony, one commanded a clear and uninterrupted view.

The bulk of the ducks this winter (1888) proved to be Pintails, though Wigeon were hardly less abundant. Wet seasons suit the tastes of the former species, which then throng the flooded plains in tens of thousands all through the winter, whereas in dry years the Pintails almost immediately pass on into Africa, not reappearing till February, on their way north. The Pintail with his very long neck, trim, slender build and sailing flight is a striking-looking bird—its appearance on the wing suggesting an intensified, or idealized, development of the duck

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type, familiar in the common mallard. We could watch them busily preening themselves, washing and coquetting, some tugging at the sweet green grasses that grew below, others daintily plucking the white water-buttercups floating on the surface, all within five-and-twenty yards, or passing and repassing close overhead, keeping up the while a wild, lively chatter, mingled with the musical whistle of the Wigeon. We have never seen elsewhere such splendid examples of the latter species as some of the old drakes shot here; the metallic colours shone with an intense lustre, and the rich dark chestnut of their heads was glossed with green and purple reflections.

At several periods there appeared to offer chances for our four united barrels to realize from twenty-five to thirty head; but our friends would not hear of it, and when at last the signal to open fire was given, the occasion was often less favourable, and the net result little more than half those numbers. Our friends' anxiety for a big shot had perhaps tempted them to overdo the "herding" business; it was, however, a relief to be at last allowed to stand upright. The labour of crouching along, bent half double for an hour at a stretch, splashing through water over knee-deep and in clinging mud, is rather severe. There is, moreover, but scant room for two behind a pony, and the crowding intensifies the discomfort of the bent position. There is the necessity to avoid bringing one's heavy-nailed brogues down on one's companion's naked heels or toes; then again, no part of one's person must show in outline above or astern, and lastly there is the gun. By an axiom of sport, it must never point towards man or beast; to carry it pointing downwards would never do—the muzzle would be a foot under water, and upwards it would show like a pole-mast above the ponies' quarters. The gun, in short, for fifty-nine minutes in every hour, is simply a nuisance.

Though the chief species of ducks against which our operations were directed were the above-named—Pintails and Wigeon—there were several other kinds, notably Shovelers—very handsome birds, the drakes, with their boldly contrasted plumage, glossy green heads and chest-

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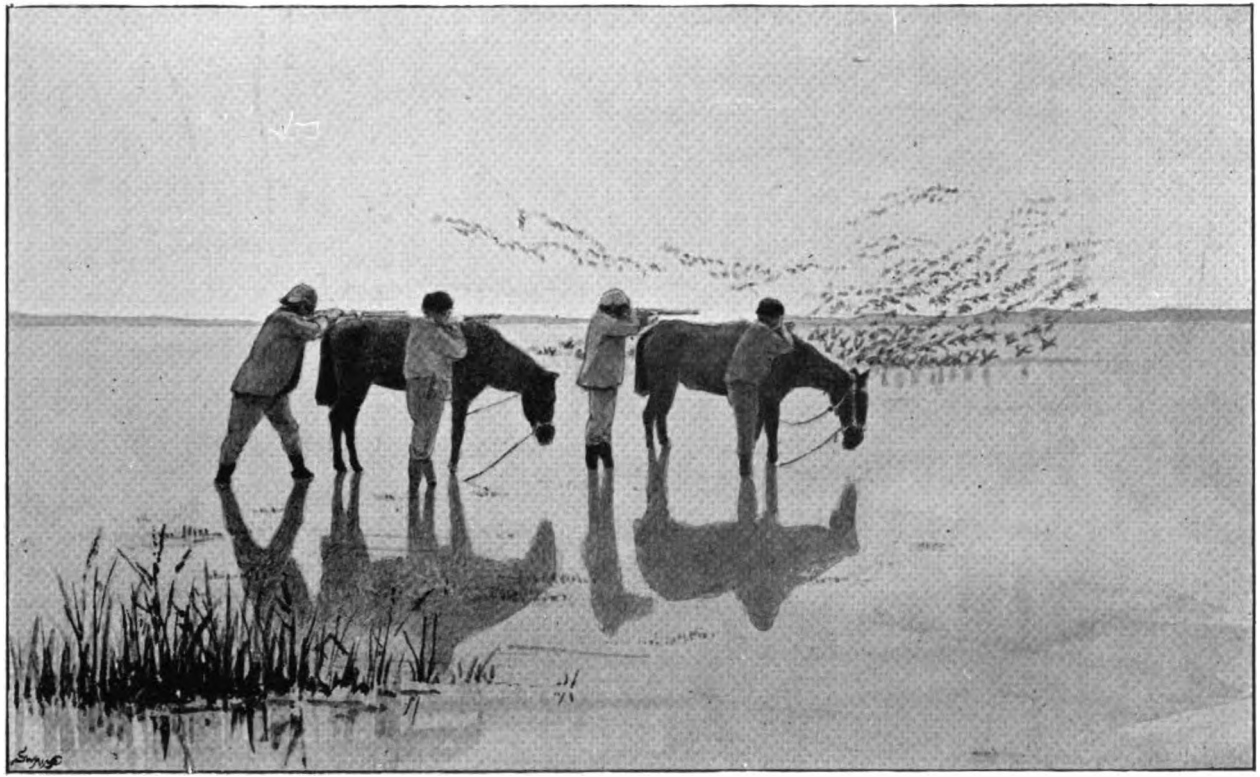

Plate XLVI. WILDFOWLING WITH *CABRESTOS*. No. 2.--THE SHOT. Page 374.

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nut breasts divided by a band of snow-white purity. Besides these there were the Mallard and Teal, and others to which we will refer presently.

It was during flight-shooting in the early mornings that the greatest variety of wildfowl was observed, the numbers of Shovelers being especially conspicuous. One morning we particularly remember; we had ridden nearly all night to reach a certain favourite spot before daybreak. Even the *pateros* were still asleep when, at 2 A.M., we rode up to their solitary *choza* on the verge of the marsh. However, we were soon in our allotted positions, each on board a tiny *lancha*, or flat-bottomed punt, far out in the marisma. Towards the dawn a very great number of ducks were on the wing—Mallards, Pintails, Teal, and Wigeon, while from an opposite direction the Shovelers streamed overhead for a couple of hours. These handsome *paletones* took my fancy, and drew the bulk of my cartridges; but whether they were too high, or the powder, in Spanish phrase, too "cold," the results were certainly not commensurate. In any case it is no easy matter to take fast and high shots when balancing oneself in a cranky punt. A valid excuse was the unusual amount of water. This disadvantage is felt, in wet winters, at every turn; here, in flighting, in the entire absence of covert in which to conceal our punts. Hardly even the tops of the rushes, tamarisk and other bog-plants protruded above the surface. Consequently the high-sided punts loomed far too conspicuous, even in the half-light, causing the fowl to "sky" or to swerve to right or left. Again by reason of the punts being fully afloat (instead of lying on the mud) a difficulty was added to the taking of quick shots, for on any sudden movement of its occupant, the tiny craft lurched almost to the capsizing point. In spite of all this, the double flashes from the adjoining *lancha* were generally succeeded by one, and often by two, answering splashes in the dark water.

Pochards and a few Tufted ducks are almost the only members of the diver-tribe that we have met with in the marisma during wet winters, though, by February, some of the Ferruginous ducks (*Fuligula nyroca*) are beginning to

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return, and probably a few White-fronted ducks (*Erismatura leucocephala*) will also, by then, be found on the deeper waters. Of the Red-crested duck (*F. rufina*), which is fairly common near Valencia, we have never seen a single example in the Andalucian marismas; nor were any Gadwalls included in the bag this season, though in other winters, not entirely dissimilar, we have secured several.

The distribution of the Anatidæ is, in fact, somewhat puzzling. Some species are very regular; others, without apparent cause, are just the reverse. The movements of Pintail, as just stated, are clearly regulated by the state of water in the marshes. Those of Gadwall and Garganey, on the other hand, bear no visible relation to these or other external conditions, but neither of the two last-named are ever abundant. The Garganey, a bird of infinite speed of wing, the first to come in autumn, the last to depart in spring, spends the mid-winter months in Africa; though one morning at dawn (January 31st) four drakes fell to a double shot, and during February we secured many more; but this does not occur every year. The Marbled duck (*Q. marmorata*), a first cousin of the teal, seldom arrives in time to take part in the wildfowl-shooting; though we have notes of an occasional straggler being recognized amidst the slain as early as February.

Sheld-ducks of both kinds are found at all seasons in the Guadalquivir district, where they remain to breed in spring; the common species in rabbit- or disused badger-holes among the sandhills, the large Ruddy Sheld-duck in low cliffs or *barrancos*. A few of either species usually fall to our guns while flight-shooting during the winter months.

Next to ducks, the most important wildfowl of the marisma are the Grey Geese, which resort thither from November till February. Their habit is to spend the night on the open water and to fly up in successive parties about daybreak to the grassy shores, where, if unmolested, they spend the day feeding, preening, and washing in the shallow water. In these situations, we frequently fell in with them while fowling with the *cabrestos*. "Anseres son!"—geese

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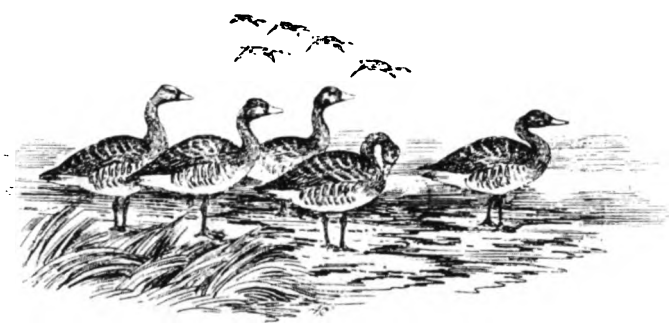
they are "—was Vasquez's verdict, as he slowly shut up the glass after a long and particular survey of the distant foreshore. The words were spoken sadly, as though soliloquizing, for the Grey Lag is altogether too wary and supicious a bird to fall readily into the snare of the fowler. Rarely indeed is it possible, by this stratagem,* to approach within the short range which alone is fatal—forty yards is the maximum for these ironclads, and twenty-five much more desirable. Except when in very small numbers—twos and threes together—it is barely worth while to attempt a stalk; our friends only undertook the operation under protest, saying it was a *compromiso*—a thing calculated to compromise their aucipial repute.



"ANSERES SON!"

Anseres son! there, sure enough, on the utmost verge of the plain, sits a straggling line with detached groups of big, blue-grey forms, some slowly moving about, others squatted on the ground or resting in various attitudes of repose. Such big packs are inaccessible; only once, that winter, did we seem to be really on the road to success. The bulk of the geese—some seventy in number—appeared to be peacefully sleeping away the mid-day hours, some

* That is, with two men behind the pony. We have since then, going *single-handed*, occasionally succeeded in outwitting even the Grey Lag.

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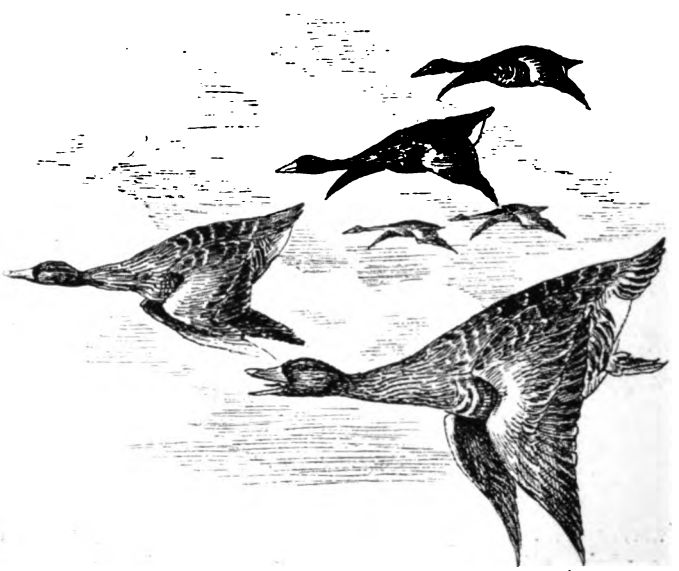
sitting on the grass, others standing on one leg with heads snugly tucked away under their back feathers. We had already reached the critical point, and the ponies well know now the importance of caution—step by step, with a halt at every fourth or fifth to crop a mouthful of grass, they slowly advance. We had proceeded thus to within a shot and a half of the still silent geese, when from an intervening belt of rush there sprang a couple of the half-wild, black pigs of the wilderness. Away they scampered, jostling and fighting with each other in their fright, and



GREY LAG GEESE FLIGHTING—DAYBREAK.

squealing as only pigs can squeal. In an instant the geese were on the alert—every neck at full stretch, every eye seeking keenly the cause of the unwonted uproar. From the sentinel gander came the low, clear alarm-note—Honk! honk! The rest were still silent, but they knew full well the significance of those low warning notes. A few seconds more and, despite our utmost care, the whole

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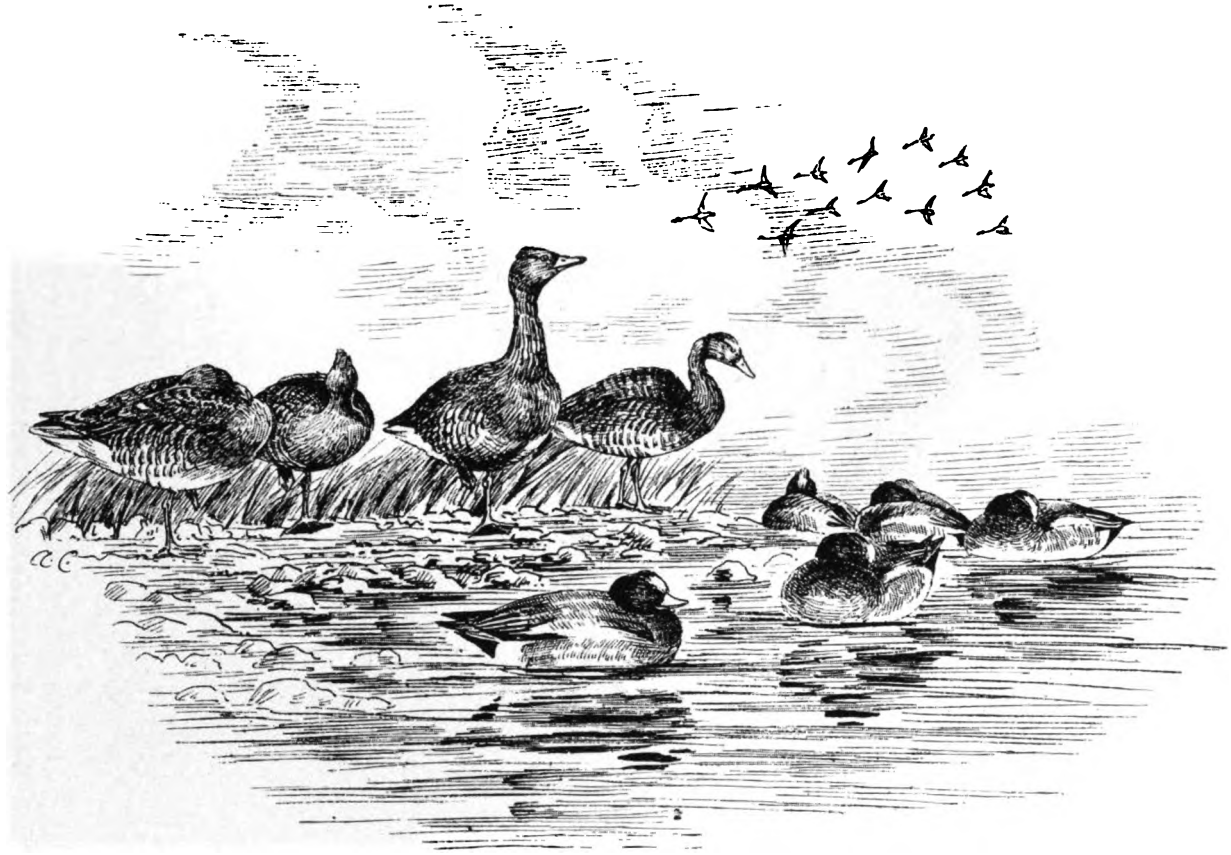

Plate XLVII. GREY GEESE AND WIGEON—MIDDAY. Page 378.

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pack rose on wing, amid deep Spanish execrations on the mothers and female relatives of those *malditos cochinos*.

The geese have particular spots along the shore to which they show a predilection—usually the point of some flat promontory or tongue of land, to which they daily resort. By placing a few decoys before dawn, and lying in wait at these *querencias*, several shots may be obtained at the "morning flight." The difficulties of wild-goose shooting are, however, proverbial, and these big Grey Lags are, moreover, the hardest and most invulnerable fowl. Yet if the bag is sometimes light, those mornings spent in the marisma will never be regretted, nor the sights and sounds heard during the lonely hours of vigil be forgotten. Within one hundred yards of the damp hole where we lie hidden are three or four separate packs of Grey Lags swimming on the silvery water, while fresh parties constantly keep arriving to join the assemblage, sailing with lowered pinions and cautious croaks towards the fatal decoy.

The geese of the Spanish marismas are principally the Grey Lag (*Anser ferus*) and the Bean-goose (*Anser segetum*) in much less numbers. The latter usually flight singly or in small trips; their note is also different—like that of a large gull. The Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus* of Linnæus), appears also to occur in the marisma. Lord Lilford mentions having observed a single example in company with Grey Lags, and has skins of this small species obtained at Seville. As regards the other European species, there is no evidence of their winter range extending to Southern Spain, though it is possible that stragglers of both the Pink-footed and White-fronted Geese may occasionally do so. Of wild Swans we have only once met with a bunch of four, as elsewhere related, and one of our *pateros* told us he had killed two or three during an exceptionally severe winter several years ago. He regarded them as extremely unusual, and in fact did not know what they were till he took them to San Lucar for sale.

Ducks and geese are not the only denizens of the wilderness. The genus of wading birds is a natural complement,

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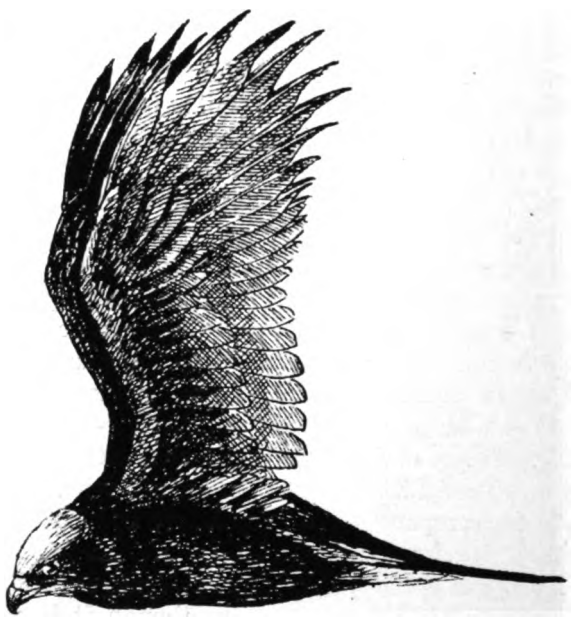
and their beauty and variety almost always lend an additional charm to shooting-days by marsh, mere, and coast; but this winter they disappointed us. The simple fact was that the whole of their wonted haunts were submerged, and they had sought their desiderata elsewhere. Whether they had passed on southward through the tropics or eastward towards Egyptian lagoons, or returned whence they had come—at any rate, in Spain they were



not. During the days spent behind our *cabrestos* we saw hardly any of these birds.

Another loss caused by the adverse season was the absence of snipe; they had arrived as usual, in October and November, but during the rains of the following month had disappeared—and not without reason, since nearly the whole of their favourite haunts now lay submerged. Among the birds which remained may be mentioned curlews, and peewits in large numbers, a few

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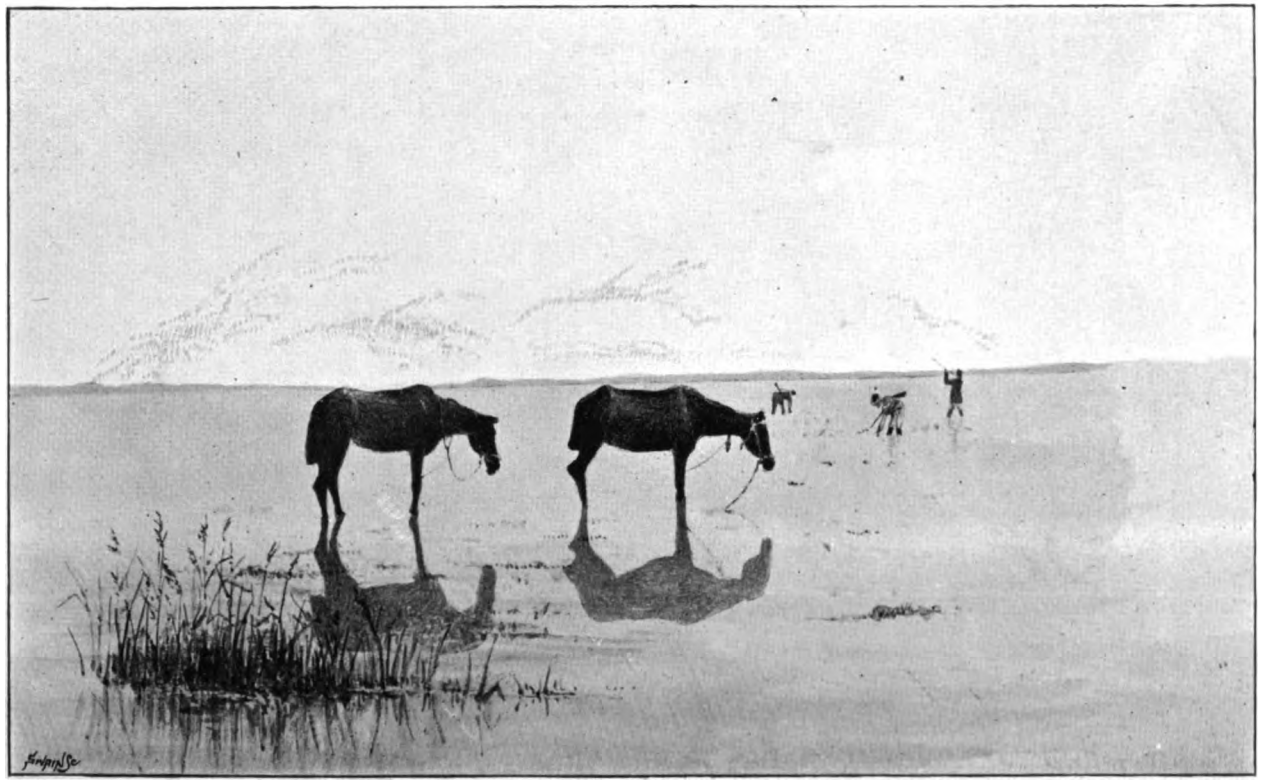

Plate XLVIII. WILDFOWLING WITH *CABRESTOS*. No. 3.—THE RESULT. Page 381.

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golden plovers, redshanks, dunlins and Kentish plovers; on several occasions, chattering packs of stilts were met with, and on January 30th a large flock of avocets were feeding on the slobby mud-flats—these the *pateros* assured us had just arrived, which probably was the case. Once, by night, we recognized the well-known note of the greenshank, and at intervals a green sandpiper would spring from some muddy pool. Beyond the fringe of rushes stood sedate herons; here and there a party of storks, and further out still, the flamingoes, whose rosy ranks impart a thoroughly southern character to the scene.

There was, therefore, no lack of bird-life, though many of the more interesting species were gone. Amidst the feathered population, apparently unnoticing and unnoticed by all, the Marsh-Harriers ceaselessly wheel and drift. After watching them for hours we have never seen them take a bird on the wing, or pursue anything at all, unless wounded. Now and then a harrier would pounce fiercely upon some object—we could not see what—among the rushes, and remain poised on outstretched wings for some minutes, evidently struggling with some victim—perhaps a frog or wounded bird—and then quietly resume his hunting. The Hen-Harrier in dry seasons we frequently observe while snipe-shooting—now, the few seen were all on the dry plains, and not on the marisma.

One day, towards the end of January, while endeavouring to circumvent the greylags, we fell in with a pack of some forty Sand-Grouse—the Pintailed species—*Pterocles alchata*. They were intensely wild, and at the end of two hours' stalking, the end of the operation seemed as far off as ever. One point in our favour was that the *Gangas* had a strong haunt at that flat, sandy spit—perhaps it was the only ground suitable to their habits that remained uncovered by water. At any rate, they refused to leave it entirely, and though at times the pack would soar away up into the blue heavens till lost to sight, and we could only follow their course by the harsh croaking notes, yet they invariably returned, descending direct to earth with superb abruptnesses, headlong as a shower of falling stars.

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At length patience and perseverance prevailed, and a couple of raking shots produced just half a score, seven males and three females. Some of the former were already assuming the black throat of spring-time, but otherwise they were all in full winter-dress, the males having few, or none, of the large pale yellow spots that, later on, adorn their backs and scapulars, and both sexes being paler and less vivid in colouring than at the vernal season.

The carriage of these birds when on the ground is very game-like and sprightly; they sit half-upright, like a pigeon, and on our final (successful) approach we observed several of them lying down on their sides nestling in the warm sand. Their flight resembles that of golden plover, but is bolder, and the narrow black bordering to the under-wing is conspicuous when passing near. At times, when high in air, they might be mistaken for teal. We found them excellent eating; their crops contained small seeds and shoots of the samphire aud other bog-plants; their flesh is dark brown throughout (that of *Syrrhaptes paradoxus* is half white, like a blackcock), and was as tender and well-flavoured as that of a grouse. The Spanish name of "*ganga*," signifying a bargain, goes to corroborate this opinion.

At length our sojourn amidst these desolate scenes came to its close. The pack-mules set out, literally, by the way of the wilderness, while we took a longer route by the shore for a final attempt on the ducks, and had a pretty *finale* to our sport. A pack of forty mallards were descried, and as the *cabrestos* drew up to the deadly range, there caught the writer's eye what might have been a bed of stones amongst some rushes, but which were in fact a fine spring of teal huddled together as close as they could sit. Towards these, when the signal to open fire was given, one gun directed his cartridges, while the other remained faithful to the *patos reales*. The result, seven mallards and eleven teal, was a satisfactory climax to a pleasant campaign under adverse conditions. For if heavy shots were scarce, the scenes and sounds we have feebly en-

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Plate XLIX. "THE FAREWELL SHOT." Page 382.

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deavoured to describe—the clouds of ducks and geese, the soaring flight of the harriers, or graceful forms of a passing trip of pintails, the stately flamingoes, or the bark of an eagle overhead—all these are essentially exotic—they breathe the spirit of wild Spain, and are full of fascination to a naturalist.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

WILDFOWLING IN THE WILDERNESS.

II.—A Dry Season (Flight-Shooting).

For days the report had reached us of the myriads of aquatic birds that had settled in the marisma. The keepers at the distant Retuerta had passed the word along to those nearer the boundary, and from these the news was transmitted by boatmen to our factotum at San Lucar. Every day the exhortation to come became more and more urgent—"come at once, or in a few days the geese will have devoured every blade of aquatic weed, every green thing that remains, and will perforce be obliged to shift to other quarters." But come we could not. The 29th November was the day previously fixed for opening the campaign, and to cross the Guadalquivir before that date was not possible. Some of our party were coming out by P. and O. to Gibraltar, others by the quicker route of the *Sud* express. With that malignant perversity of fate that ever seems to snatch from us the realization of one's ideal, we had, this year, fixed the day a week too late.

Mid-November was already past; autumn had given place to winter, yet not a drop of rain had fallen. Since the scorching days of summer the fountains of heaven had been stayed, and now the winter wildfowl from the north were pouring in only to find the marisma as hard and arid as the deserts of Arabia Petræa. They found not what they sought—instinct was at fault. True to their appointed season came the dark clouds of pintail, teal, and wigeon, the long skeins of grey geese; but where in other years they had revelled in shallows rich in aquatic vegeta-

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tion, now the travellers find in their stead a calcined plain devoid of all that is attractive to the tastes of their tribe. For the parched-up soil, whose life-blood has been drained by the heats of the summer solstice, whose plant-life is burnt up, remains panting all the autumn through for the precious moisture that comes not. The carcases of cattle and horses that have died of thirst and lack of pasturage strew the plains; the winter-sown wheat is dead ere germination is complete.

In such years of drought many of the newly-arrived wildfowl—especially pintails—pass on southwards (into Africa) not to return till February; but numbers crowd into the few places where the precious element—water—still exists. Such a spot is the Retuerta; and along its ten-mile length of tasselled sedge and 30-foot bamboo are concentrated such hosts of wildfowl as seldom entrance the sportsman's eye. In this favoured nook in distant Andalucia let us now live again a few of those eventful days.

At length our party of ten guns are assembled in the shooting-box. Never before, at this season, have we ridden those thirty miles across so thirsty a land. Vasquez and his *confrères* received us reproachfully—Why have we not come sooner? But are *all* the geese gone? *Hay, hay anseres, pero no la decima parte de qué habia*—"there are some geese," he replies, "but not the tenth part of what there were." Then a smile came over his Red-Indian countenance, as he added—*pero todavia hay para divertirse*—"there are yet enough for sport." When Vasquez reckons there are enough for sport we know that, allowing for Andalucian exaggeration, there will be hot barrels before the day is done. What he calls, in his expressive language, a *salpicon*—a sprinkling, may mean several acres in a flock; a *puñado*, or handful, a thick mass of several thousand! When he talks of a *tiro regulár*—an *ordinary* shot, we know he means about thirty couples of mallards with one barrel. For Vasquez has striven for a living, as his fathers did before him, with the ducks of these wilds; and when he *did* let off his ponderous blunderbuss it was at very close quarters, and meant execution. Quantity was

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his desideratum, for he had to make a large bag for little money, depending on others to realize his spoils in the distant market, and, as usual, much of the hard-earned coin stayed in the hands of middlemen. Thus Vasquez, with other marsh-men, was tempted by our offer of a fixed wage, and has for years been keeper on the marisma, where his reed-thatched *choza* is barely visible amidst waving sedges and bulrushes hard by the most favoured haunts of his aquatic charges. Vasquez cannot tell you who is Prime Minister at Madrid, and cares not whether England may wish to surrender Gibraltar to Spain; but he *can* tell you whither that pack of duck, like a small cloud on the horizon, is hurrying to alight; he can point out to you the birds fresh come from the north, as distinguished from earlier arrivals, as he can also tell you when ducks, which, to the uninitiated, appear quite happy and content, are packing up, and will be gone with the morning's light. He will take you where the snipe are in hundreds when you have searched their favourite haunts in vain; and will place you at dusk, if you have faith in him and wait till sunset, where the greylags will pass within ten yards. So Vasquez is a useful man, though he knows nothing of the great world outside of the Retuerta. We felt, nevertheless, that we were a week too late, and had perhaps lost the best chance of a century.

The plan of campaign was to line the northern end of the marsh for some five or six miles, placing a gun in each one of certain selected spots. For this purpose, large casks are sunk at intervals, some well hidden among rushes, others in open pools; but in these latter cases the tubs were cunningly concealed by cut tamarisks and other water-plants.

To place the guns in their respective tubs, extending over six miles of bog, and the nearest tub almost the same distance from our quarters, is a lengthy operation, necessitating a very early start. Long before dawn we were in the saddle. Dark and rough at first was the ride just preceding that impressive change—the lifting of

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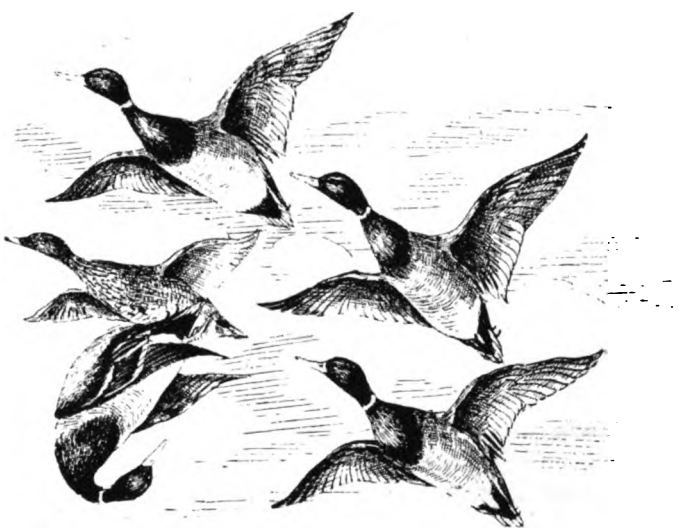
night's mantle from the earth. Gradually grew these first rays, and soon the whole east was aglow, gleaming across parched plains, as the glorious morn awakened. To the enticing oasis of the Retuerta pushed forward the long cavalcade, but the sun was high ere all the strategical points could be simultaneously occupied. For it was arranged that each gunner should advance at a given signal to his post, and that no shot should be fired till all were in position. Of the difficulties and dangers in reaching those points, through marsh and quaking bog,



we will not stop to speak; at length all were in place, and ducks already streamed overhead within half gunshot while we awaited the signal to open. Then from the distant land a shot resounded, and simultaneously, all along our line, rang out a merry fusillade; here comes my first chance, a pack of wigeon, straight for the tub. A bright-winged drake paid first tribute, and two more from "the brown" fall to the left. As fast as cartridges can be slipped into the breech they are required, and two guns are kept going continuously—now at a

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swinging flight of teal or swift garganey,* then at the more stately pintails, next at a single shoveler-drake on his straight and hurried course. Now the ten-bore is useful for a string of mallards which are already seeking safer altitudes, and for a couple of curlews, for once at fault. But we need not recapitulate, even were it possible to remember, the rapid sequence of shots, which for an hour were almost continuous. Shots of every kind there offered—incoming, outgoing, to right and left, direct or oblique, and at every height and angle, acute, obtuse, and perpendicular. Now a flight of wigeon, skimming low on the water-level, suddenly fling themselves in one's face, all unseen till far too near; then from behind, with a rush as of a whirlwind, a trip of swift-winged teal or swifter garganeys almost take one's hat off, then "sky" like rockets, on seeing the danger—difficult to stop are these! At intervals, there is a variation, when, during the earlier part of the action, the files of grey geese are seen and heard as they sail along, looming so huge among the smaller fowl. They are not too high as, outward-bound, they cross our posts; but let them get *well* over-head, as near as ever they will come, ere you open fire, or no mighty splash in the water behind will gratify your ear. The bulk of the shooting, however, is at files of duck speeding fast and straight in bee-lines overhead: high as a rule, mostly *very* high, the sort of shot that, once learnt, can be generally pulled off—and satisfactory shots they are, requiring an infinite degree of *faith* and forward allowance.

At the end of an hour the file-firing slackened, but still for another hour it continued fairly fast. The larger ducks and the geese had betaken themselves to the sea, or to the dried marisma respectively; but great numbers of wigeon and the smaller ducks still sought resting-places up and down the long Retuerta. Of the geese but few comparatively had fallen, though thousands were seen in

* Garganeys are said to be the swiftest of all the duck-tribe, and to lead the migrating flights, both on their southern journey and also when steering north. Hence their name: "*capitanes*."

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air. Hardly had the firing commenced than these betook themselves to the dry marisma where they made shift to feed on the roots of the *castanuela* (spear-grass). This circumstance, however, was foreseen, and troubled us little; it is the geese *coming in* that offer sport, not the geese going out, and we well knew that before night they would be needing a cool draught at the pools of Retuerta.

At the end of two hours, the writer left his battery to collect his spoils; a goodly pile of ducks, besides three geese and two flamingoes, though perhaps not in due proportion to the heap of emptied cartridges. About a quarter-mile away lay the shore, to which, during the mid-day interlude, I made my way through water, mud, and matted tamarisk. The nearer strand, where cattle had cropped the rush, was alive with snipe, while amidst the heavier covert beyond, numbers of teal had sought asylum. With these, and passing ducks, there was plenty of employment, and at the end of an hour, when it was necessary to flounder back to the battery, I had exhausted my cartridges and formed sundry piles of slain—in all nineteen ducks, two geese (right and left) and over twenty snipe, besides a bittern and a few "various."

The sun was now lowering, and the return of the geese might belooked for. I had started none too soon on the return "plodge," for with the heavy walking and yet heavier burden, I had hardly ensconced myself in my battery ere the welcome konk! konk! was audible, and some twenty greylags came gliding in. Straight for the sunken tub they held their course, and not till almost overhead did they descry the lurking gun. Then with redoubled flaps they swerved off, changing the downward gliding flight for an upward movement; but, though for a moment they hung in air, yet, somehow, it took both barrels ere the leader collapsed. Shot after shot at what appeared a fatal range failed to stop them *clean*, and I decided to let the next come in even nearer. This time only three came drifting down. They passed within shot, but I refrained; wheeled round the pool, and headed straight in; there was no mistake this time—the geese were

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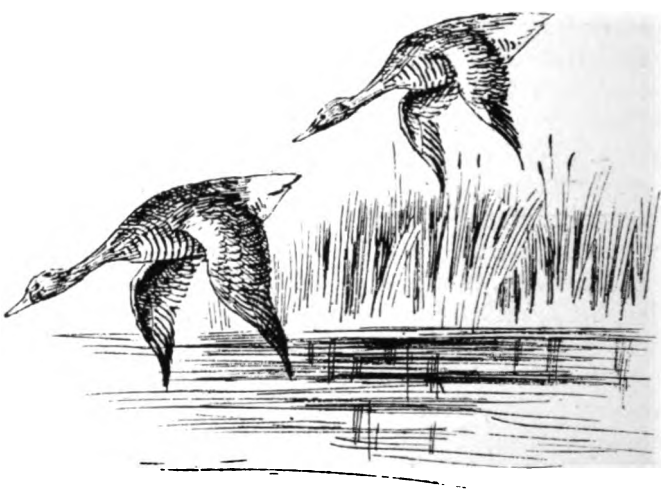
not twenty yards off, and two of the three fell stone-dead. I breathed more freely now; and let the geese come in to a range that for any other fowl would be *too near*, holding even then well forward, and sundry heavy thuds on the darkening waters attested the success of these waiting tactics, and registered the death of another greylag or bean-goose. These latter came in singly, or in twos and threes, and are distinguishable by their harsher note and rather smaller size; the greylags average eight pounds, some old ganders turning the scale at ten. Every minute it became more difficult to see; night was closing in apace,



but with it came more and more geese. The rattle of gunshots and rustling of strong pinions was incessant—hardly had one gone down than another flight swept in. At last the geese came silently; the call-note which during daylight announced their approach was now no longer uttered, and they drifted so fast on to the water that one only became aware of their arrival by the heavy ploughing splash as they alighted. Presently only those that came low against the dying after-glow in the west could be seen at all, and after a shot one had to listen for the splash that bespoke a kill. Gunshots now became fewer, a mere

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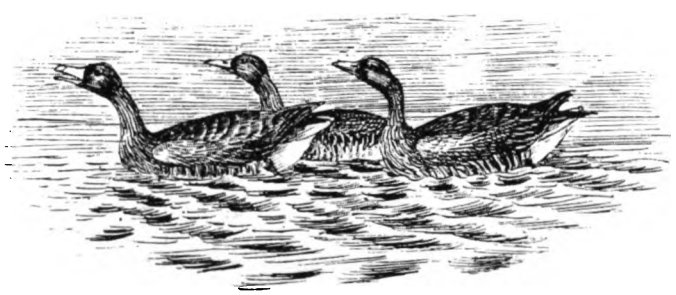
dropping fire, and in a few minutes more even this shooting at ghosts became no longer possible. Then came the splashing of horses, and I knew that Caraballo was coming to look for me, and a good line he took in the dark and featureless morass.

Half an hour later we were beginning to assemble at the bonfire of blazing samphire-bushes which had been lighted as a beacon to gather around. The day ended with a slight *contretemps:* one of our party with his servant was missing. No answer could be obtained to our signals: nor on our arrival at the lodge were the lost ones there. Though there could be no danger, yet it would be most unpleasant for our friend to pass the night in the wilds without food or shelter. At ten o'clock keepers were



GREYLAGS—DAYBREAK.

despatched to scour the country, but it was four hours later ere Manuel (at 2 A.M.) returned with the luckless wanderers in charge. They had mistaken our beacon, and had steered for what proved to be a charcoal-burning miles away.

When the tale of slain had been told off, and Vasquez brought in the totals as 81 geese and over 300 ducks (besides sundries) for the day, we were inclined to forget those unresponsive greylags, and to imagine that, for flight-shooting, with 12-bores, at passing fowl, such results were not to be obtained every day, nor in every land.*

* In the previous year (1888) the opening bag was 37 geese, 373 ducks, and 46 various.

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Three other field-days followed with the wildfowl, besides two interludes with small-game, and a two-days snipe-shoot along the remote Rocina, which produced 353 snipe,* a few duck, teal, bitterns, and sundries: and, when these happy days were over, the total score stood:—

713 ducks.	8 quail.
247 wild geese.	36 rabbits.
402 snipe.	7 hares.
15 woodcock.	9 bitterns.
161 partridge.	44 sundries.

Among "sundries" were included common and ruddy sheldrakes, gadwall and garganey, marbled ducks (a few), common and white-eyed pochards (several), many coots, an egret, stilts, and a pair of oyster-catchers.

An Arctic Winter in Southern Spain.

Never in our experience of well-nigh a quarter of a century had such extremes of cold been known in this sunny land as those of December, 1890. Nor will the destruction wrought by that phenomenal winter be remedied for many a long year, as brown and blasted olive-yards, and thousands of acres of orange-groves, almost every tree cut back to the bole and grafted as a last resource, bear testimony.

Here, in a sporting sense, is the report of that winter, and its effects on fowl and fowling. *December 8th*, 1890.—Not a drop of rain fell this year till the 2nd inst., and the conditions for sport appeared as favourable as those of last year (already described above). Cold as Siberia was our ride to Vasquez's *choza* (November 28), in the teeth of the bitter east wind which swept across the dry marisma, and cut into our very marrow.

Valiente helada va caer este noche! say the keepers, and

* The best day, walking for snipe, December 4, 1889, produced 232 snipe—six guns.

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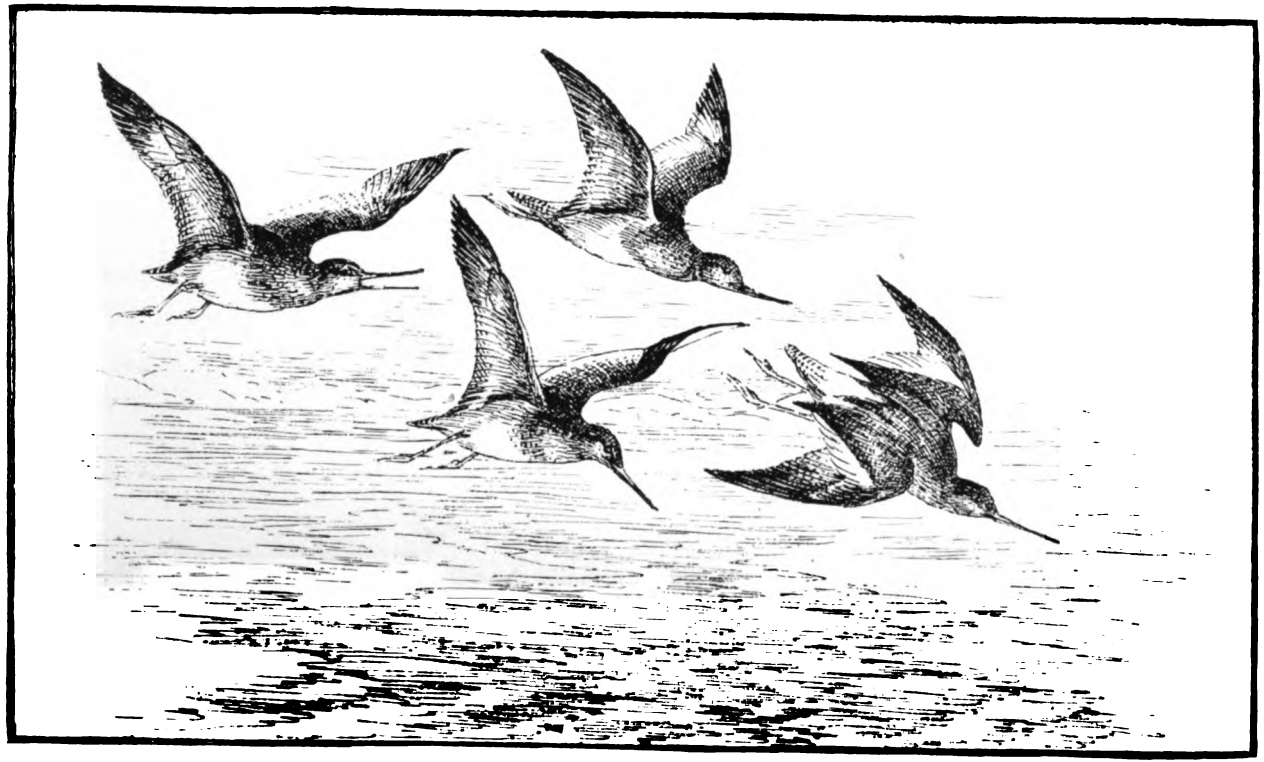

Plate L. REDSHANKS. Page 393.

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verily a terrible frost *did* fall that night: for when Caraballo awakened us at six in the morning, the poor fellow's teeth chattered, his limbs shook, and he declared that never before had *Dios* made so cold a morning.

My luck favoured me for once, and by lot, No. 5 was placed by the deeps of "El Jondon," flanked by miles of bamboo and cane-brakes of tropical dimensions. The oozes were covered with ice, at first so thick as almost to bear the horses; but as the water deepened, the ice broke and cut their fetlocks; so we had to seek our posts on foot, dry shot for the first time on record. It fell to me to fire the signal-shot, so I took an opportunity of sending to speedy end just nine teal with the two barrels. I had never before held the luckiest number; to-day I was in the *flor* and the *nata* of the fray; it will give some idea of the character of the sport this day that, at times, it was desirable to decline *all* offers from the duck-tribe, and to reserve one's attention, and cartridges, exclusively for the geese.

The solid ice around my battery lent a novel feature to experiences of wild sport in Spain. The ducks, even heavy mallard and pintail, rebounded from the ice-bound surface; and a goose, falling obliquely, also slid for twenty yards before remaining still. No ducks broke the frozen coverlet; but geese came crashing down through the ice, each making itself a captive in its own chasm. I was soon surrounded by these ice-bound prisoners, bringing down, during the day, over thirty greylags, besides some eighty ducks. Many of these, however, fell in the tall canes and reed-brakes behind, and as we shot till well after dark, it was impossible to gather all—even of the dead. The whole bag, which, had the shooting been uniform, should have been much greater, amounted to 363 ducks and 72 geese, besides snipe and 39 "various."

A note on the subsequent movements of the wildfowl may be an appropriate complement to this chapter. During the severe weather of December, most of the ducks disappeared. At the New Year comparatively few remained, and a second shoot resulted, as regards wildfowl, in

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failure. This, however, did not greatly disturb us—other game demanded attention, and we knew our web-footed friends had only bid us *au revoir*. "They will return at the end of February," asserted Vasquez; and return they did, to find the sunken tubs at El Jondon and along the cane-brakes of Quebrantiero again "occupied in force"—once more along the line rang out a fusillade.

The transit of the aquatic birds to and from Africa often presents remarkable spectacles. During several days at this season (February-March), while cruising in the Straits, the sea has been sprinkled in every direction—both Atlantic and Mediterranean—with bands of duck coming off from the African shore and skimming low on the waves on a northerly or north-westerly course. They do not proceed direct to the Far North, but linger for some days on the Spanish side. Here, early in March, their numbers almost equalled those of November; that is of ducks, for the geese had almost entirely withdrawn. On March 5th clouds of wigeon gyrated at vast altitudes—mere specks in the upper air, while others assembled, massed together in hordes on the water, *echando corros para irse*—arranging travelling parties, as Vasquez puts it: sure signs both, of the coming change. By March 10th fully four-fifths had disappeared; while on the 15th scarcely a duck of all their thousands remained, except of those species which habitually nest in Spain—*e.g.*, mallards, sheld-ducks, &c., or which come there in spring expressly for that purpose, such as the white-eyed pochards, marbled and white-fronted ducks, and the like.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

THE STANCHION-GUN IN SPAIN.

During wet winters in Spain, when marismas and submerged marshes form miniature seas, the customary methods of wildfowling are no longer of any avail. Opportunities of employing the *cabresto* are few and far between: while flight-shooting on an area indefinitely extended is profitless and uncertain to the last degree. But the marismas, with their myriads of winter wildfowl, appeared to offer, during such seasons, an exceptional—indeed an ideal field for the use of the gunning-punt, and stanchion-gun.

During the wet winter of 1887-8, when we were constrained helplessly to contemplate floating flotillas, all, in effect, inaccessible to our guns—these tantalizing spectacles urged us to seek "some new thing." A gunning-punt with its artillery appeared to be the one thing needed, and with it, we felt confident that from fifty to a hundred duck might often be secured at a shot. Accordingly, in the autumn of that year (1888), we sent out from England boat, gun, and gear—in short, the complete equipment for "the wildfowler afloat."

The little craft duly reached the Guadalquivir in September; but here an unexpected difficulty arose. The Spanish custom-house took alarm. True, the little vessel was an entire novelty and an innovation; even in the Millwall Docks she had created some surprise, and here, she was incomprehensible. No such vessel had ever before floated on Spanish waters, and the official mind took time to consider. That oracle, after several weeks of cogitation, ordered the removal of the tiny craft from the obscure port

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of Bonanza to the full light of the custom-house at Seville. Here, after many more weeks of delay, it was solemnly declared that that white-painted six-foot barrel was "an arm of war"; that "the combination of boat and gun savoured of the mechanism of war"; and, lastly, that "the boat could not be permitted to pass the Customs until it had been *registered at the Admiralty* as a ship

of war," thus forming an integral part of the Imperial navy of Spain.

We were informed, in reply to a respectful protest, that a high official of the Admiralty at Madrid—the Deputy Chief Constructor, we think, was his title—would "shortly" be visiting the arsenal at San Fernando, where a new war-ship was nearly ready for launching, and that

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he would then take the opportunity of inspecting our impounded gunboat at Seville.

The measurements of this "British Armada" were: length over all, 22 feet, breadth of beam, 3 feet 6 inches, by 9 inches depth of hold; her armanent a gun of eighty pounds weight, throwing sixteen ounces of shot. Not a very formidable vessel, yet a hostile fleet off Malaga would hardly have aroused more official fuss.

Six or seven months elapsed before these difficulties were smoothed away, as difficulties in Spain, or elsewhere, do dissolve when prudently and properly treated; but the wildfowling season was over, the ducks had disappeared, ere the "Boadicea" was released from official durance and allowed to proceed to the scene of action.

The first obstacle was now surmounted, but a second, and more insuperable difficulty arose, one which forms the real "pith" of the present chapter. From the first our local wildfowlers reported badly of the new craft; her trial cruises were not satisfactory, for, while the *pateros* experienced no difficulty in approaching the less wary birds, such as flamingoes, herons, and the like, yet ducks of no sort could be outmanœuvred; at any rate not on the open waters. On the return of the ducks in autumn following, the fowlers still reported that they found the large packs wholly inaccessible, nor could they secure more than a paltry half-dozen or so at a shot.

These reports, however, did not disturb us greatly; we attributed the failure of the *pateros* to lack of experience and technical knowledge in handling the "Boadicea"; for, despite their skill in fowling, the art of working a big gun afloat was one of which they could know nothing. It was, therefore, with unabated confidence that the writer embarked on board the trim, light craft, and shoved off on his first Spanish punt-gunning campaign.

An exhilarating prospect lay before us; nowhere in British seas could such aggregations of wildfowl be seen, nor so favourable a spot be found: there was no tide or current to fight against, no deeps where one loses bottom, no hidden shoals nor shifting sand-banks to bar one's

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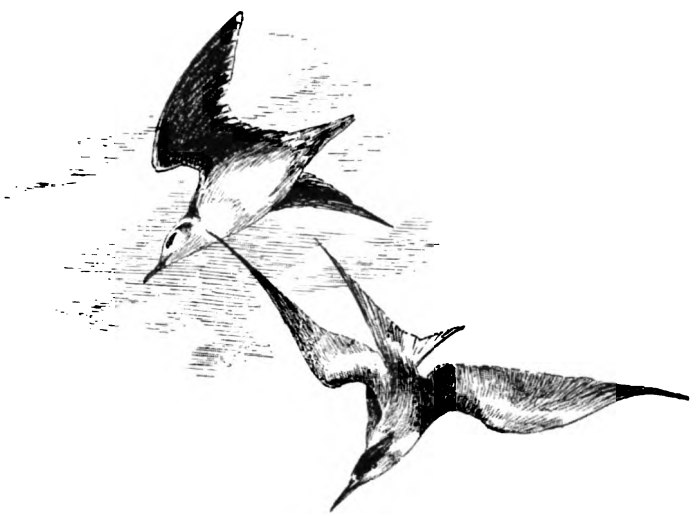
course; and, as too often happens in our tidal waters at home, to snatch success from one's grasp in the very moment of its realization.

No; here we had smooth shallow water, uniform in depth, practically stagnant, and with a firm level bed of mud. And everywhere on its surface, and in the clear atmosphere above, floated or flew those wild and graceful forms so dear to a fowler's eye—the duck-tribe in endless variety. Half a mile away, the opposite shores of the sound, the Lucio de los Caballeros, were dark with multitudes of



duck: fresh files kept streaming in to alight among their fellows, and at intervals the roar of wings, as some bird of prey put their battalions in motion, resounded like the rumble of thunder. Close overhead hovered graceful Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*), adults whose dark under-wing contrasted with the snowy breast, others in the marbled plumage of immaturity. As the punt shot forward, hidden amidst islanded clumps of rush and sedge, we passed, almost within arm's-length, the weird-looking grebes and singular long-legged stilts in every posture of repose and

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security—more rarely in those of suspicion. Rather further away waded half a dozen spoonbills, revolving on their axis at each forward step in their peculiar fashion; a purple heron or two, and sedate storks seeking a feast of frogs. A pack of avocets swept by in chattering flight: ruffs and redshanks, green sandpipers, and others of that class, with whole troops of plovers, splashed and preened in the shallows. All these we passed silently by. Even a "bunch" of the beautiful garganey teal would not tempt us this morning, for ambition soared high.

Gradually we stole round the flank of the ducks—a long way off, for it was necessary to save the wind and get to leeward. In this we succeeded, and there now only remained between us and the black streak that represented thousands of keen eyes, some 300 yards of open water: surely no very formidable obstacle with a well-handled craft. So we thought, and so a fair experience of ducks and their ways at home justified us in thinking. Alas! for misplaced confidence: hardly had our bows shot clear of the last sheltering fringe of rush than the nearer birds began to rise, and spread the alarm through the deep ranks beyond. Quickly the danger-signal was communicated to the furthest outposts: the roar of wings increased, and in a few seconds the whole mass lifted off the water as one might lift a carpet by the corner—not a living thing remained afloat, while the heavens grew dark with quivering pinions and gyrating clouds, and resonant with a babel of bird-music.

Thus ended the first attempt in conspicuous failure; and a second, third, and fourth shared a like fate: we were never within measurable distance of succeeding, and began to realize that what our native fowlers had reported was only too near the truth. It is fair to add that Vasquez's handling of the punt, after a few preliminary trials, left little to be desired; his aptitude for the new work was surprising. He held a capital course, steered accurately to signal, and got a "way" on the boat that would have satisfied Hawker.

The very numbers of the ducks proved, to some extent,

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a safeguard; the smaller packs could occasionally be outmanœuvred under cover of some reed-bed—but this only with thirties, forties, or fifties; the area covered by the larger bodies outflanked even the most extensive *juncales*. On the open water we have never yet succeeded (though we have tried a hundred times) to approach these main armies of duck, and believe now that it cannot be done. Why this should be so is another question, and a curious one. The nature of the duck-tribe is the same in Spain as in England: wherever they are found they are among the wildest and most wary of birds. Here, however, we had them in numbers surpassing anything we have seen on British waters, and frequenting, too, a region which seemed pre-eminently adapted for the use of punt and big gun. Yet we found them, on the desolate Spanish marismas, many-fold more inaccessible to a punt than on the harassed and heavily-shot harbours of England. The only reason we can suggest is that, these waters never being traversed by boats of any kind, the fowl are inclined to avoid a gunning-punt as readily as they do a human being.*

The impossibility of obtaining a good shot by fair means being demonstrated, as a final resource we laid up the punt among the sedges, at a point where the fowl were wont to congregate. Here, at the end of two hours, we had about a thousand birds before the gun: wigeon, shovelers, and a few garganey, all mixed, with about a score of pintails and three or four gadwall; but, whether purposely or by accident, they kept at very long range from our sedgy shelter, and when at last, owing to a leaky seam

* This failure of the gunning-punt in Spain is the more inexplicable as in Egypt—the only other southern land in which, to our knowledge, this sport has been attempted—the very reverse was the case. An Englishman who took out a punt to the Nile abandoned the pursuit, as he found no difficulty in taking the craft to such close quarters that he bagged fifty to sixty each shot. Similarly, Lord Londesborough found the fowl in the Egyptian lagoons so easily accessible that, after securing 2,290 geese and 1,300 ducks in the season (sixty-four geese being his biggest shot), he abandoned further operations as lacking the one essential condition—that of difficulty. (*Badminton Library*.—"Shooting: Moor and Marsh," pp. 261–2.)

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Plate LI. ' A HUNDRED AT A SHOT—NOW OR NEVER." Page 395.

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and evening coming on, we were obliged to risk a long shot, only some six or eight duck were secured.

To complete this sketch of Spanish punt-gunning, we will briefly narrate the incidents of two other days' sport, as follows:—*February 28th.* Started at daybreak, taking both the punt and a *cabresto* pony. The first shot was at eleven teal, of which eight fell to the two barrels (12-bore); the second shot realized seven more teal and a marsh-harrier. The latter capture afforded rather a curious

"THE BITER AND THE BIT."

incident: six teal lay dead, the seventh, being a lively cripple (which could fly some distance), I sent Vergara after him in the punt, while we proceeded along-shore with the pony. A large hawk, however, had at once "spotted" the cripple, and an exciting chase ensued—the hawk making stoop after stoop, the teal as often escaping by diving. But the dives grew shorter and shorter, and at last we observed that the bird of prey had prevailed, for he remained suspended betwixt wind and water

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and was evidently making good his hold. Then with heavy flight he bore his burden straight towards where we crouched, watching, behind the pony, and settled on the shore. Him we then approached in the customary way, and as the fierce-looking *aguilucho* stood on his victim, crushing out what remained of life, a charge of No. 4 secured both the *biter* and the *bit*.

Harriers are so numerous in the open marisma that four or five may often be seen at once, slowly drifting about over the waste, and marvellous is the speed with which they detect a disabled fowl. With a lively cripple, it is often a race between the human and the feathered raptor for rights of possession, and in flight-shooting the wounded are carried off under one's very eyes.

After another *cabresto*-shot, which added ten wigeon to the bag, we reached the broad Arroyo de la Madre, which was "paved" with wildfowl in numbers that we cannot estimate. Mere numerals convey nothing—unless it be a suspicion of exaggeration—and any other attempt would only involve the use of inadmissible superlatives. Suffice to say that for leagues that broad water was a living carpet of birds. We now entrusted our fortunes to the "Boadicea" and her big gun. The boat lay near the junction of a creek with the main channel; the nearer water was dotted with teal, garganey, and wigeon; a little further off, the white livery of the shovelers was conspicuous, and beyond again, with the glasses, we could distinguish, among acres of wigeon, a sprinkling of pintails, gadwall, and a few white-eyed pochard and mallard. On the slob-land in front, fed nine spoonbills; a small herd of flamingoes on the left, and near them a grey line of geese, whose sonorous clamour was distinguishable above the medley of bird-notes. Ducks, however, of all kinds are silent enough by day.

Once more the punt proved a failure. No sooner had she emerged from the cover of the *armajos* (samphire), than the nearer teal and wigeon began swimming out, scattering away to right and left in lines all radiating from the focus of alarm. Ere anything like fair range

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was reached, not a single solid point presented itself to our aim. Opportunities there were to kill, say, a dozen or more, but these paltry chances were declined without second thought. In the result, some two or three hours' careful work—"flattened" on our chests all the time—were not rewarded by a single shot from the big gun.

Towards evening we observed flights of duck—chiefly wigeon—pouring in constant streams towards some low mud-islets which afforded cover for approach. Behind these we lay for an hour, awaiting the gloaming, but the short southern twilight proved a serious obstacle. In the few minutes occupied in "shoving out" from our shelter towards the floating phalanxes in front (we had awaited the last possible moment) the light had disappeared, and it became impossible to distinguish objects *on the water*, though those in *air* were yet clear enough. There were, we knew, hundreds of ducks before the gun; but the shot—like nine-tenths of those fired at haphazard—was a failure. Fifteen wigeon and two pintails lay dead; the cripples, if any, it was impossible to recover in the gloom; and we sadly started to "pole" the long leagues homewards, reflecting on the singular uncertainty of sports mundane.

This day thus realized 42 ducks—17 to the punt and 25 to the *cabresto:* though, had we followed the latter system alone, the total would have been much heavier, while every available chance was given to the punt-gun, which never, *until after dark*, produced a feather.

As a contrast we will briefly outline the results of our next day's shooting, employing the trained pony alone. The artillery used was a single 4-bore and a double 12: six shots were fired, and the net result was 82 duck, besides minor spoils. The day was perhaps more favourable, since, March having now commenced, the fowl were congregating into those closely-packed *corros*, or hordes, which mark the preliminary stage to departure. Thus, one broadside to-day realized 32 wigeon, and another should have done better, but for a "hang-fire." Still there was nothing exceptional about the day's results. We have often much

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exceeded the total named, but select this particular day merely because it followed in immediate sequence to that last described.*

Since writing the above, the experience of two more winters has served to confirm its correctness. From a dozen or fifteen up to twenty ducks may occasionally be secured at a shot, but the huge bodies of wildfowl on open water remain actually inaccessible, and the visions of heavy shots—80 or 100—of which we had dreamed, no longer disturb our midnight slumbers.

* Our biggest shot with the *cabresto*-ponies realized 74 ducks and teal; guns, a single 4- and a double 8-bore.

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Plate LII. LA MARISMILLA—A SHOOTING MORNING. Page 405.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

DEER-DRIVING IN THE PINE FORESTS.

My First Stag.

By a rush-girt glade in the heart of the *pinales*, or pine-region, stands the lonely shooting-lodge of La Marismilla. The sombre forests which surround it are a chief stronghold of the Spanish red deer, which find shelter in the abundant underwood and rich pasturage in the grassy dells. The wild pig prefers the more isolated thickets which lie towards the outskirts of the forest.

The system generally adopted for shooting the forest-deer is "driving." The sylvan geography of these great areas of pines, devoid to a stranger of landmark, point, or path, is intimately known to the foresters, who mentally map out the whole into sections for the purpose of the *batida*, or drive. The exact boundaries of each section vary, of course, from day to day in accordance with the wind; for the red deer is gifted with a fine sense of smell, and instantly detects the human presence when "betwixt the wind and his nobility." Perhaps the readiest means of conveying an idea of this sport of forest-driving will be to relate the vicissitudes that befell the writer before succeeding in bagging his first stag.

My first *puesto*, or post, was in the face of a sand-ridge clad with tall pines, and there were, I think, three guns on my right, four on the left. All these, even my nearest neighbours (200 yards away), were of course invisible amidst the broken ground and masses of brushwood which intervened; and their positions were only approximately indicated by

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sundry long lines traced in the sandy soil by the gun-stock of the old forester, Juan Espinal, before leaving me at my post. These lines served to indicate both the positions of the adjoining guns, and also the limits *within which* a shot might not be fired. It is obviously a paramount necessity in this class of shooting never to shoot *forward—i.e.*, into the beat; the game must be allowed to pass right through and well clear of the line before a shot can be thought of: a circumstance which adds vastly to the difficulty of placing one's bullets on the right spot.

The first thing when one is left alone in the solitude of the forest is to survey carefully one's field of action, to consider all possible contingencies, and prepare accordingly; the most essential point being so to place oneself as to see without being seen.* My first impression, in this case, was one of wonder as to where I could possibly place a bullet at all. My post, as already mentioned, was in the face of a ridge, or rather in a hillock forming part of the ridge, and having a deep pass on either hand. Thus the receding ground sloped away so as to disappear from sight just at the entrances of the passes, forty or fifty yards away. In short, the possible lines of fire intersected the probable course of the deer, if any came, at exactly the point at which I should lose sight of them altogether. It was unsafe to move my position backwards, and in front I could find no convenient cover; so returning to my allotted post, I bethought myself to record my fears, and plot out the situation in my pocket-book. Then I settled down in the small redoubt of cut bushes I had put together, and waited. The solitude of the forest was delicious, and the silence only broken by the gentle fluttering of some small birds in the pines overhead. Continually there fell upon

* The following note, being made from experience and on the spot, may be worth inserting:—In driving large game of any kind, be careful to make a good screen: there is always time to build up a breastwork either of branches, or rocks, or snow, or whatever the material at hand may be. If placed behind a thick bush, cut a deep nick into it with the hunting-knife, so that one stands *well back—i.e.*, right into the bush, and appears to form an integral part thereof. How glad one is of these little precautions *when game appears!*

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and around me small objects from above—it was a party of hawfinches pelting me with scales of pine-cones, broken off in their search for seeds. These and the crossbills are shy and wild, and, except on such occasions when unaware of one's presence, seldom allow of approach. For half an hour I watched their active movements, the tree-creepers and fire-crests, and the antics of a small animal, I think a genet, that was performing fantastic feats on a sunny knoll in front: meanwhile the distant shouts of the beaters were becoming more distinct, and at last I thought I could recognize the excited cry of *Ya va! ya va!*—there he goes! The genet vanished down a burrow, the birds ceased to pelt me, and a few moments later, to my excited eyes, the whole green expanse of juniper and heath-scrub before me appeared alive with great tawny beasts, all bounding forward directly towards my position. As the deer approached the hillocks I observed that a specially fine stag, with two smaller ones and some hinds, would pass on my right, while three more stags were making for the pass on the left. I concentrated all attention on the first, which slowly trotted past my front within thirty yards; but, as I had foreseen, had already more than half disappeared ere he reached the firing point and my bullet sped towards him; then, turning sharp round, I sent the second barrel at the last of the other three stags, just bounding from sight into the deep pass on the left. The results were of course invisible; both were snap-shots, but I *thought* I had laid on true, and was musing on the possibilities, more than half inclined to be ecstatic at having, or believing I had, really "pulled off" a clean right and left in my first interview with the Spanish red deer, when a rustling in the brushwood in front disturbed these happy cogitations, and another stag with three hinds appeared. They came forward quite slowly, evidently suspicious of danger ahead, and stopping at intervals to look back towards the noisy beaters. They rose my hillock at a foot's pace, the stag leading—an eight-pointer—and at last stood actually within five yards. There was, in fact, nothing between us but the single pine and the slight breastwork of bushes I had

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built up as a screen. The stag stood for some seconds gazing backwards over his shoulder; then, as he turned to advance, he caught sight of me crouching beneath the junipers, almost under his nose—and the bound he took at that instant was a sight to remember. Away they dashed, all four, straight along the line of guns; but, turning outwards, shortly after leaving my sight, the stag fell to the rifle of my next neighbour.

Then the beaters came up, and eagerly we went off to examine the result of my two shots. Alas! no *ingentia corpora* lay there, and on following their tracks for some distance, it was quite clear that both stags had escaped scatheless. The only relief to deep disappointment was that little memorandum I had made beforehand, foretelling the catastrophe, which was indeed more attributable to an ill-judged position than to any want of care.

Then, shortly afterwards, when I did manage to place my bullet in a fine stag of fourteen points, a wide and splendid head, the coveted trophy was again lost to me by the rules of sport, owing to the fact that another leaden messenger had preceded mine. This stag passed through the line far to my right, receiving a shot in the stomach as he passed, the effect being to turn him to me, and he passed at full speed not thirty yards behind. A ball through the heart rolled him over; but the first wound, in his left side, was unquestionably fatal. After this, for a long time, no luck fell to my share; only hinds broke near my *puestos*, and, though they were most interesting objects, with their timorous graceful movements, their great supple ears inflected hither and thither, and large affectionate eyes, which gave me infinite pleasure to watch, yet they were not available quarry, and passed on unmolested. One hind, which passed within ten yards, was followed (January 8th) by a tiny fawn. Occasionally a stag came forward, cautiously feeling his way, step by step, to make sure of avoiding danger ahead; but these always managed to detect something in time, and broke back, or passed through at some other point. One of these stood for some seconds almost within touch, only a thick bush between us,

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and others had all but reached the fatal line ere they changed their course.

One chance, however, I certainly lost by my own fault. A buzzard came sailing along the pine-tops towards me; I was posted on a small plateau crowning an isolated hillock, and overlooking a sea of dark green pines. Promiscuous shooting is, of course, debarred; but the *batida* was nearly finished; I had seen the beaters cross a ridge within a quarter-mile, and determined to have the hawk. Just as the buzzard approached a fair range, I observed that a good stag had ascended my hillock, and for some twenty yards ran in full view. Then he dropped down from sight just before it was possible for me to exchange guns. A downright bungle! I would fain have hidden my disgrace in silence, but it is a distressing feature of sport on this tell-tale sandy soil, that it is impossible to conceal or to mitigate one's "*chambonadas*"—call them misfortunes. Nothing moves but leaves behind it an indelible mark, and no mark ever escapes the keen eyes of the forest-guards. "Look here!" exclaims Anillo, "here has passed a good stag—*aqui ha pasado un buen venado!* "why did not his worship fire?" Why indeed!

Some days passed and I began to fear the campaign might close without a change in my luck. Nor were these deep forests particularly interesting ornithologically: at first sight they appeared rather devoid of bird-life—that is in winter: we have often ridden for hours without seeing more than a few ravens or a kite. Among the thick bushy tops of the stone-pines were the hawfinches and crossbills, with a few other species, but these were remarkably shy and difficult of approach. On afternoons when our "drives" were finished before dark, I took the opportunity of trying to obtain some of the forest-haunting birds; but in this a singular difficulty occurred. In Andalucia the sun gives us an hour or two more of his company than on a winter's day at home. All day long he shines in a blue and cloudless sky; but when he sets, it is night. Hardly has his rim sunk behind the distant pines

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than it is dark, and the nocturnal concert of frogs and owls has commenced; a clear, strangely deceptive darkness, for on the ground one cannot see to shoot a rabbit or a low-flying woodcock, yet overhead it is still light, and day is prolonged for half an hour more. The sunset effects on the western skies are gorgeous displays of rich colour, and even in the east there is a rosy reflection which rapidly fades away.

But there is none of that pleasant half-light we enjoy in our northern clime. The transition from day to night is startlingly sudden, twilight lasting only a few minutes. The feathered race is well aware of this and prepare for the event by going to roost a full half-hour before sundown. One of the first signs of approaching night is the flight of the ravens. Perhaps one has not realized the fact that the day is far spent, and is reminded of it by their dark files slowly crossing the heavens towards their roosting-places while it is yet broad daylight. The same habit is observable with the smaller birds. All day long they have been abundant enough; but during the last half-hour of daylight not one is to be seen, and when their retreat is eventually found they are buried, some in the pine-tops, others in thickets of myrtle or lentiscus-scrub—fast asleep in daylight. Hence these half-hours at dusk produced but little. One evening, while wandering among the pines, a buzzard dipped down from a lower branch and silently sped away till a shot in the wing brought him down. This bird proved to be one of the remarkably handsome pale varieties of *Buteo vulgaris*, the whole plumage of a warm cream-colour, slightly mottled and splashed above with dark brown; irides dark and claws *white*. My brothers (H. and A.) obtained buzzards in somewhat similar plumage in Germany (adults, shot at the nest) in the spring of 1878, but I have not otherwise met with the variety in Spain, the Spanish type being generally dark. Waiting on the line of the raven's flight, I dropped a pair of these birds: and shortly afterwards observed two very large tawny-coloured eagles flap heavily into a pine, but failed to approach within shot, or anything like it.

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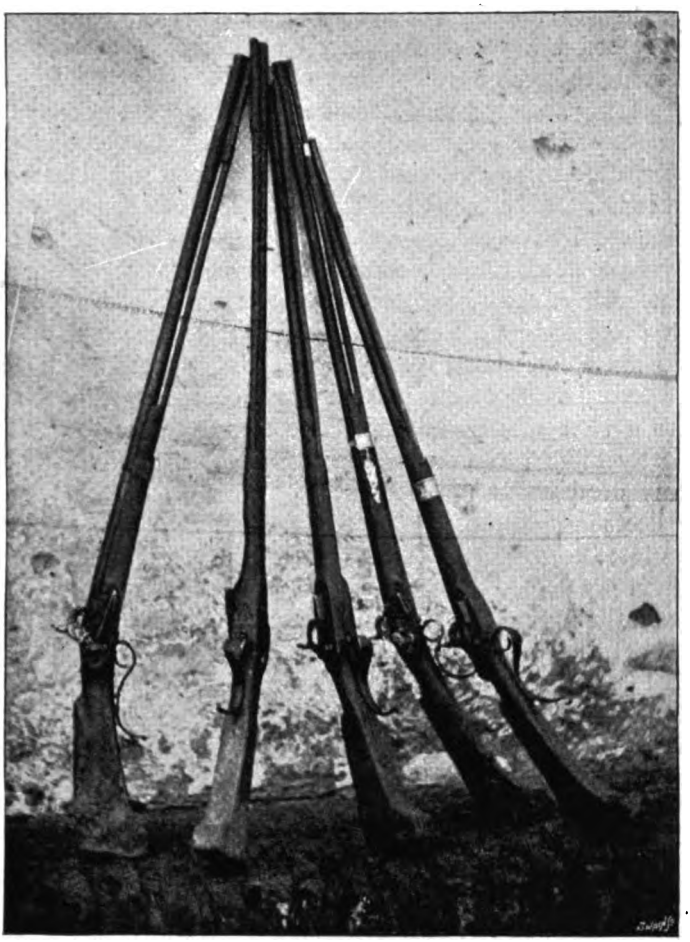
To return to our deer, and the delightful days spent among the pinales, revelling in the lovely winter weather. Luck at length returned: after a long day, during



SPANISH GUNS.

which several stags and one pig had been bagged, we reached a small *mancha* known as "El Rincon del Cerro Trigo." This was a small beat, and the last of the

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day; nor was it expected to be productive, as our beaters on a former drive must have skirted the outer edge of the Rincon. My position was on the brink of a steep sand-slope, perhaps fifty feet in height, its summit level with the tops of the pines in the *mancha* below. Outside there stretched away open barrens, some small *corrales* alone serving to break the monotony of utter desolation. Hardly expecting a shot, I was sitting idly under cover of a bushy pine-top which protruded, half-dead, from the verge of the steep descent, when a hind mounted the slope and broke close at hand. This aroused me, and a few seconds later she was followed by two stags—eight-pointers—slowly crossing out over the open, a lovely shot. They were only fifty yards off; but, owing to the irregular outline of the *mancha*, my position was somewhat embayed, and it was necessary to give the stags extra law to clear that part of our line which bent backwards. I watched them traverse nearly fifty yards ere a shot was permissible, and by that time they were partly hidden from view among some slight hummocks. Any dead cistus or remnant of a sand-submerged pine collects around it that shifting substance, and half-hidden amidst these my stags were trotting forward when I gave them my double salute. Both went on, but on emerging from the hummocks, the larger beast was clearly hard-hit, though they continued cantering down the sloping ground, and two more bullets at long range only raised little puffs from the ground beyond. I knew I was sure of this stag; and a few minutes later a finer beast emerged, the ivory tips of his antlers shining white in the evening sunlight. Him, I resolved, I must have, and never was gun laid on with more intense desire. The distance would be some eighty to one hundred yards, and the stag treated the advent of two bullets with what looked very like indifference, galloping off at top speed, despite a third salute from the express ambushed on my right. I watched him away to the edge of a small *corral* half a mile off, and in which the two first stags had sought a retreat. But it was all over with him—poor beast, his course was run, and his tracks plainly told the tale to those who could read—

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though I must admit I was not one of them. The *rastro* of the first stag showed big blood-clouts almost from the shot, and he was easily secured close by where he had dis-

THE ELEVEN-POINTER

appeared from view. The second was far less distinct; indeed, no sign of a "hit" was discerned till just before reaching the distant *corral*. Here the faint trace, tiny

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drops of blood, all enveloped in sand, quite indiscernible to my eye, were instantly detected by the *guardas*. The dogs were laid on, and within a few minutes we heard the crash which told of the stag at bay. The final scene was

A FIFTEEN-POINTER.

just completed when I reached the spot—on foot, for in the rough scramble through forest and broken ground I had managed to get thrown, gun and all, and preferred to finish the pursuit on my legs. The first ball had

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passed through the ribs, rather far back; the second ("express") had entered his stern. The first stag was also shot through the "lisk"—not brilliant performances, perhaps! but I had got my two stags, the first carrying nine points, the second a shapely wild head of eleven: and, since those days, we have now and then succeeded in placing the rifle-ball in more orthodox positions.* Quite the finest hart of this campaign fell on the same beat—a superb head of fifteen points, having extremely broad and massive horns, though of no special size of body. Total bag for the day: eight stags (two royals) and two wild pig.

As a sequel to the above, it may be interesting to annex the following diploma of the "Royal and distinguished Order of Mae Corra," conferred upon the writer shortly after the events narrated. Our readers may translate it or leave it at their own risk.

Por cuanto Don A—— B—— C——, vecino de Inglaterra ha hecho digno del distintivo que usan los cazadores de la Real y Distinguida Orden de la Mae Corra, matando por primera vez un venado de nueve puntas en la Mancha de Cerro del Trigo Coto de Dª Ana partido de la Marismilla termino de Almonte el 12 de Enero, 1878.

* It may, however, fairly be added that we were using, in those days, spherical bullets and the old cylinder smooth-bores—always erratic in ball-practice beyond forty or fifty yards. All that is now superseded by the introduction of the Paradox rifled gun (Col. Fosbery's patent), one of the prettiest inventions and most remarkable improvements in modern gunnery. With this beautiful weapon, which shoots ball as accurately as a rifle, and comes to the eye as handy as a game-gun, no distracting doubts need flurry one's aim at flying stag or boar within one hundred yards; even snap-shots in covert are now a luxury instead of the nerve- and temper-trying ordeal of yore. Such is the power and penetration of the hollow-fronted conical ball that we have "raked" a stag from stem to stern at one hundred and forty yards, the bullet entering his chest, and lodging near the root of the tail almost undamaged, after traversing the whole of the animal's vitals. For all Spanish large game, the 12-bore Paradox, weighing 7¼ lbs., and burning 3½ drs. of powder, is an admirable weapon, and, except for ibex and deer-stalking in the higher cordilleras, where very long shots may be necessary, it almost takes the place of the heavier express rifle.

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Yo D. Carlos Fernandez Brescaglia, Decano de los cazadores de esta ciudad suficientemente autorizado expido el presente Diploma para que el referido Don A—— B—— C—— pueda usar libremente el mencionado distintivo que debe ser en un todo conforme al modelo adjunto.

Dado en San Lucar de Barrameda el 17 de Enero de 1878.

El Decano,
(Signed) CARLOS FERNANDEZ BRESCAGLIA.

El Secretario,
(Signed) DOMINGO L. DE VILLEGAS.

The insignia referred to represent a couple of stags' antlers, locked in mortal combat, with the legend :—

"Ab istis ventis liberet te Deus si maritus es."

"DROPPED IN HIS TRACKS.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

WINTER IN THE MARSHES.

Snipe-shooting.

Spanish, *Agachona, agachadiza.*
Portuguese, *Narceja.*

The Peninsula has always been famous for its snipe-shooting, but the sport differs in some ways from that practised on British marsh or moor. The snipe in Spain does not, as a rule, frequent rushes or other covert. The Spanish marshes in winter afford scant covert of any kind; hence the snipe is proportionately wilder. Rarely does the long-bill spring at close range: the bulk of the bag must be cut down at such distances that a snipe-shooter at home would very probably decline the offer—without thanks. But there are exceptions to this. In certain localities, particularly in Portugal, we have enjoyed excellent snipe-shooting on wide-spread expanses of rushy marsh and under home conditions. The rice-stubbles also, in districts where rice is grown, afford perhaps the finest snipe-shooting, often with abundant covert.

Many of the best snipe-grounds, however, may be described as inundated pastures. Here the summer-scorched herbage barely hides the naked earth—or rather fine mud, more slippery than ice. The ground here, however, is firm; the *deep-mud* bogs are quite another, but equally favourite resort. Before one's view there stretches away what appears to be a verdant meadow, dead level, and clad in rich green grass. Walk out on it, and you find it is bog, soft as pulp—millions of flat-topped, quivering tussocks, each separated by narrow intervals of squashy slime,

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knee-deep if you are lucky; the tussocks afford no foothold, the slime no stability—you cannot stand still, yet hardly dare advance. Before you, behind you, to the right and left, rise snipe in scores—in clouds: the air resounds with petulant, tantalizing cries. But you cannot steady yourself for an instant to shoot: to halt on hummock or balance on mire is equally impossible—not that it matters much, for hardly a snipe has sprung within fifty yards; the majority at over one hundred. At length one rises close at hand—a jack, probably—and in a supreme effort to avenge outraged dignity by his death, equilibrium is hopelessly lost, and the snipe-shooter slowly sinks to a sitting posture amidst mire and mud that reaches to his waistcoat-pockets.

So extremely flat and naked are these marshes that not a snipe, one would imagine, could manage to hide thereon. Yet even with a powerful field-glass not a single snipe can be detected where hundreds are squatting. Their power of concealment is marvellous, and is recognized in the Spanish name, "*agachar*" meaning to hide, or "lie low."

Where the flight of the birds is known, or where two or three well-frequented marshes lie adjacent, excellent sport may be had by lying in wait at one bog whilst the others are being shot over. This is a matter of local knowledge. A driven snipe, or string of snipes, high overhead, or a jack pitching in to alight, like a butterfly in a breeze, offer shots as varied and difficult as even our modern masters of legerdemain in the arts of gunnery can well desire.

Broadly speaking, all the best snipe-grounds in accessible districts—aye, and some fairly inaccessible ones too—may be said to be preserved. There may, probably do, exist unknown and unpreserved spots which would abundantly reward the explorer; but, in a general way, the casual sportsman on the unpreserved wilds of Spain or Portugal should not reckon on more than ten, twelve, or perhaps fifteen brace of snipe per day. On preserved grounds, the following figures, selected at random from records of over twenty years, will best show

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the sport that may be had with snipe in Southern Spain :—

Nov. 20, 1873.—Catalana (3 guns), 166 snipe, 1 pigeon, 10 quail, 1 landrail=178 head.

Nov. 30, 1873.—Catalana (2 guns), 115 snipe, 2 woodcock, 3 rails, 1 waterhen, 1 bittern=122 head.

Dec. 21, 1873.—El Torno (3 guns), 108 snipe, 17 woodcock, 3 rabbits, 8 golden plover, 2 pigeons, 1 badger=139 head.

Dec. 20, 1874.—Retuerta (4 guns), 160 snipe, 36 duck and teal, a marsh-harrier, and 8 sundries=205 head.

Nov. 18, 1877.—Retuerta (3 guns, half day), 103 snipe, 4 quail, 2 partridge, 6 ducks, 1 goose, 2 rails, 1 eagle=119 head.

Nov. 19, 1882.—(3 guns), 155 snipe, 28 sundries.

Dec. 1886.—(1 gun), 96 snipe : 20 couple shot passing over one spot, from one marsh to another.

Dec. 4, 1889.—Rocina (6 guns), 232 snipe, besides partridge, quail, duck, &c.

Dec. 12, 1889.—Retuerta (2 guns, W. E. Brymer and W. J. B.), 60 snipe, 58 ducks, 11 geese=129 head.

Woodcock.

Spanish, *Chocha*—(Andalucia) *Gallineta.*

Arrives in November, but never in any quantities—ten or twelve couple in a day is an unusual bag, and we have none worth recording.

The latest woodcocks shot in Andalucia are about the middle of March.

Quails.

Spanish, *Codorniz.*

Though not strictly marsh-birds, yet quails at times abound among the moist rushy prairies, both of Spain and Portugal, and hardly a hillock of drier ground or microscopic patch of maize-stubble but will yield a brace or two.

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The largest bag we can find recorded in our game-books is 52 brace in a day; but believe this has been, and certainly easily might be, largely exceeded. At certain passage-periods the Andalucian *vegas* simply swarm with this dashing little game-bird, and at such times, with dogs well entered to quail, very large bags might be secured by any one specially following them.

One afternoon, when returning from snipe-shooting, we fell in with an *entrada* of quail, in a belt of dry rush and sedges, and had bagged 27½ couples in much less than an hour, when daylight and cartridges ran short.

Andalucian Quail.—Unlike its larger relative, this small quail is not migratory; a few are found at all seasons, especially on the dry palmetto-plains, where at dusk its curious "roaring" note, from which is derived its Spanish name *torillo*=little bull, is often audible.

Our friend, Mr. W. R. Teage, meets with a few of this small bush-quail nearly every year when shooting near Ovar, in Portugal—generally in September.

The Crane.

Spanish, *Grulla*.

He who eats the flesh of crane, runs a Spanish proverb, lives a hundred years*—and beyond all question the stately *Grulla* is one of the wariest and most difficult birds to circumvent.

Cranes are common enough throughout all the open *vegas* and corn-growing plains of Andalucia from early autumn till spring: few days but one sees them either passing high overhead in loudly-gaggling skeins, or feeding in troops on the newly-sown beans or wheat. In the latter case, cranes are not infrequently mistaken for bustard, but rarely permit the cordon of mounted men to be drawn around their position; for, though rarely sought after, the crane is imbued with even wilder spirit than the much-prized bustard. For many years, the few *Grullas* we suc-

* "Quien come carne de Grulla, vive cien años."

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ceeded in killing were merely chance-shots at bands passing over, when we had happened to be concealed by tall sedges or bulrush; and even these only by virtue of mould-shot at very great heights.

During a recent winter, however, we discovered a means of shooting these wary fowl. It is the habit of a crane to assemble at some remote marsh for the purpose of roosting. By day, it should be specially remarked, the crane is *not* a marsh-haunting bird, but is only seen on *dry* ground, feeding entirely on grain, acorns, and the like; but invariably retiring to the marshes, or wettest spot on the prairie, to roost. Towards the sequestered swamp selected for their *dormidero*, during the last hour of daylight, files of cranes may be seen winging their stately course. As darkness gathers round, the assembling host presents an animated scene, while the music of their magnificent trumpet-note resounds for miles around.

Such a spectacle we witnessed one March evening when on a bustard-shooting expedition; and returning a week later, had, at length, the wary cranes at our mercy. Ensconced in "blinds" of rudely-woven carices near the centre of a dreary swamp, we soon had these majestic birds filing close overhead, or flapping past at pistol-range. Not less than 500 cranes must have appeared, "flighting" from every point of the compass, and the sight, with the sound of their clarion-notes, formed, for half an hour, as impressive a spectacle of bird-life as we have witnessed.

There is intense gratification in out-generalling any animal that has long defied one's efforts; but it is rather a sense of supremacy than mere slaughter that is sought. After shooting seven specimens of the "flighting" *Grullas*, we were content, and have never since molested them. This marsh, which, being "ten miles from anywhere," is an awkward place for evening flight-shooting, continued to be their nightly resort till well on into April, after which date the crane disappears from Southern Spain; though (as elsewhere recorded) a small and decreasing colony continues to breed in the neighbourhood of the Lagunas de Janda.

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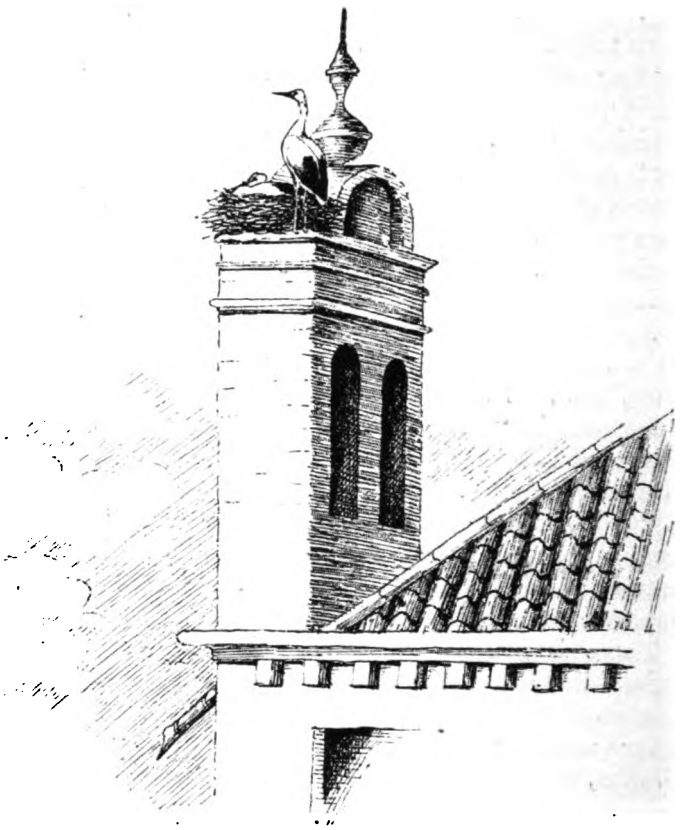
The Demoiselle Crane.

(*Grus virgo.*)

We have seen several examples of this beautiful species shot in the marismas and corn-plains of Andalucia during



STORK'S NEST—THE BANDERAS, SEVILLE.

the spring-months. It is just possible that a few pairs may still breed somewhere in that wide region, though no ornithologist has yet succeeded in establishing the fact.

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White Stork.

Spanish, *Cigueña.*

Though not a sporting bird in any sense, and in some respects almost *sacred*, the stork attracts the sportsman's attention by its size, boldly-marked plumage, and majestic appearance on the wing. Nesting chiefly in the towns, on churches and other buildings, as well as on the peasants' cots and on trees in the country, storks are dispersed in hundreds during winter over the marshy plains, though many also migrate to Africa at that season. Their food consists of frogs, as well as lizards and various small reptiles and insects; in May we have watched them snapping up locusts by dozens.

Black Stork.

Spanish, *Cigueña negra.*

The only birds of this species we have killed are a pair, shot right and left, near Jerez, in March, many years ago. We have reason to believe that the black stork breeds on the Upper Guadiana, and in Castile have observed it in May.

On May 16th, 1891, we watched a pair which evidently had a nest in the crags overhanging the Rio Alberche, New Castile, but had not time to discover its exact position. Manuel de la Torre states that it breeds yearly in the Montes de Toledo.

Bittern.

Spanish, *Ave-toro, garza-mochuelo.*

Twenty winters ago, in the marshes below Ovar, in Portugal, my dog *Nilo* came to a "point" near a clump of thick sedges. Two yards before his nose I espied a strange apparition—a mere point erect amidst the rank herbage, hardly thicker than and much resembling a sere and yellow flag: there was no visible semblance of head or form—

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only a sharp beak, and an eye which seemed to be a part thereof; the whole slim object pointing vertically heavenward. Next moment the insignificant point developed into a huge brown bird—more and more expanses of brown feathers emerged from the sedge till a pair of heavy green hanging legs wound up the procession. When both barrels were emptied, I had time to perceive that a bittern was slowly flapping away.

Those were bitter moments: but since then we have killed many a bittern while snipe-shooting, and could have killed many more had there been any object; for they lie very close, and offer a mark like a haystack.

According to the Spanish peasants, the flesh of the bittern is health-giving (*muy saludable*): and the same worthies also state that the strange boom is produced with the beak half-immersed in water.

Rails, Crakes, etc.

The landrail, reversing its home habits, is only found in Spain in autumn and winter, its well-known spring-note being never heard in this southern land. The common water-rail, the spotted crake and Baillon's crake are all three abundant in winter in the marshes—more so than in spring: and we have also shot the small (unspotted) crake—on one occasion, one of these intensely-skulking birds was induced to take wing by a dead snipe falling right on to his strangely compressed little body.

Water-hens are as common as at home; and at rare intervals the great purple water-hen is sprung by the spaniels from some sedgy morass. This fine bird, like the crakes, is very difficult to flush; but on occasion, when burning the cane-brakes to drive out deer, wild cats, &c., we have seen two or three in a day.

Coots (two species) in certain localities afford fine sport, by "driving" with a number of boats: we have bagged thus over 100 in a day, besides other wildfowl; and grebes, also of two species, besides the little dabchick, are also abundant.

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Geese and Ducks.

It is unnecessary to add more than a mere list of the various *Anatidæ* to be met with in winter in Southern Spain.

Grey geese arrive in thousands in November to remain till February. Our best bags (flight-shooting) are: in one day, 81; in four days, 247. This was in November, 1889. The great majority of these are greylags, the remainder being of the "bean" description. We have shot no other species, though others occur. The Spanish name for all geese is *anseres* or *gansos*.

Mallard (*pato real*).—Common at all seasons.

Pintail (*rabudo*).—Abundant in *wet* winters; in dry seasons they pass on into Africa.

Shoveler (*paleton*).—Abundant every winter.

Gadwall (*friso*, or *silbon real*).—Rather scarce in winter; a few breed in Andalucia.

Wigeon (*silbon*).—In millions, October till March.

Garganey (*capitanes*, or *caretones*).—Irregular; some years many are shot in November, and again in March.

Teal (*zarceta*).—Come in clouds in October.

Marbled Duck (*pardilla*, or *ruhilla*).—A summer duck, rarely seen after the end of November. Returns in March, and breeds in hundreds.

Pochard (*cabezon*).—Only *locally* common, in winter.

Tufted Duck.—Have shot these occasionally on the rivers in winter, and up to April.

White-eyed Pochard (*negrete*).—Chiefly a summer duck, but common in November and early December, and again in February.

White-faced Duck (*porron*).—Another summer duck, not seen in mid-winter.

Scoter (*pato negro*).—In big flights on the coast in winter: shot a drake on Guadalquivir, April 8th.

Merganser.—Once or twice shot in winter—the only member of the *merginæ* we have met with.

Sheld-duck (*pato-tarro*, or *ansareta*).—Several shot in winter in marisma. Some remain to breed.

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Ruddy Sheld-duck (*labanco, pato canelo*).—A few shot in winter and early spring: breeds in *barrancos* or low cliffs in the Isla Menor, &c.

NOTE.—The ducks of the Spanish marismas are extremely irregular as to the species which appear: these varying with the seasons and state of the water. Thus, one winter, pintails will swarm; another, gadwalls and garganeys are conspicuous; the next, at corresponding seasons, one or the other will, perhaps, be almost entirely absent.

WILD SWANS.

Spanish, *Cisne*.

These are rare and exceptional stragglers to Southern Spain. In February, 1891 (a severe winter further north), we found four wild swans—two fully adult, one of them a very large bird—frequenting the Lucios de la Madre, in the marismas of Guadalquivir. They were very wild, and even when alone and separate from other fowl, refused to allow the approach of our gunning-punt. Eventually we fired at them at long range (No. 1 shot), but, though one was badly struck, we failed to secure it: have little doubt, from their note and appearance, they were hoopers.

AUGUST IN THE MARSHES.

SINCE writing the above, we have enjoyed a new experience—a duck-shooting campaign in August. During two days, some 250 ducks were bagged, of which half were mallards (the drakes already distinguishable on wing), and of the rest the greater proportion were marbled ducks, the following species being also included:—gadwall, garganey, ferruginous and white-faced ducks, ruddy sheld-duck, three or four teal, and two pintails.

The latter were probably wounded birds lingering since the preceding winter; which may also, perhaps, explain the presence of three greylag geese which were seen but

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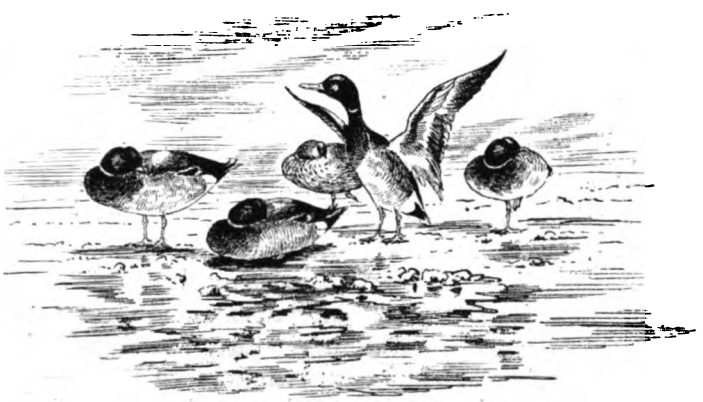
not secured. Several common snipe were also shot—these facts afford "food for reflection!"

During the shooting, the air was alive with birds; besides ducks, there were herons of all sorts—old and young—egrets, white spoonbills, night-herons—many young ones, brown and speckled like bitterns—together with crested and eared grebes, dabchicks, terns, coots and pratincoles in thousands; while above all, sailed files of glossy ibis with curious barking croaks, several cormorants, and a string of cranes.

Among miscellaneous birds shot were most of the above, with little bitterns, various rails and one purple waterhen, little gulls, whimbrels (?) and bar-tailed godwit.

It is worth adding that a dead bird, left floating, was completely devoured in less than five minutes by water-beetles (*Dyticus*), which hollowed out the body and left nothing but empty skin and feathers! One felt that, had one the bad luck to get bogged, these creatures were capable of making away with a man well under half an hour.



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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DEER-STALKING AND "STILL-HUNTING"

On the Southern Plains.

Though left to the last, the system of "*rastreando*," as it is called in Spanish—stalking or "still-hunting," as we have rendered it in English (though neither expression is perhaps a precise equivalent), affords some of the prettiest sport to be obtained with the rifle in the Peninsula. As an example of this sport, we have taken our latest and not least successful deer-stalking expedition, which took place in March, 1892—exactly twenty years after the campaign recorded in the *first* chapter (p. 23) of our book.

There only remained a few days before the season for deer-shooting would close. For more than a week we had been ready awaiting a change in the weather; but heavy rains day by day delayed a start. Never had there been known so wet a winter. From the Giralda tower at Seville, the whole country appeared a sea, and the great river, in the early days of March, was causing serious anxieties to the Sevillanos, having reached a higher level than local records had hitherto known. Already its angry waters dashed in foam over the key-stones of Triana bridge; the transpontine suburb was submerged to the second floors; from its flat roofs starving men and women cried for bread as boats passed by, navigating, Venetian-fashion, the flooded streets. The city itself was an island—only preserved from inundation by incessant labour at the embankments, over whose topmost stones the menacing waves already lapped, when a lull in the storm saved Seville. A breach in that embankment or a further rise,

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and the stately and historic city had been swept away—as Consuegra and many a small town or village was swept away in Southern Spain during the terrible floods of 'ninety-two.

Such climatic conditions would not be wholly unfavourable for deer-stalking—reducing the area over which the game is scattered—provided there should now be some cessation of the down-pour. A lull had at length occurred, and the writer set out from Seville to spend the few remaining days of the season in a remote region of those brush-clad prairies which cover so vast an area in Southern Spain. My only companions were two Spanish *cazadores*, brothers, men of keen eye and of tried skill in woodcraft. The object was to endeavour by *rastreando*, or still-hunting, to secure a few of the old and wary stags which roamed over these barren down-lands; but which were far too cunning to lose their lives in the customary Spanish *batidas*, or drives. Was it possible, single-handed, and on such comparatively open ground, to out-manœuvre these old forest-monarchs, which, on a former visit, we had seen make good their escape from six or eight rifles? This question we decided to solve, and to devote the remaining days to "still-hunting," abandoning every other form of attack.

The rains had left much of these rolling downs too wet for shelter, many of the thickets and patches of "scroggy" wood being breast-deep in water. The *picaros tunantes*, *i.e.*, cunning old rogues, as Manuel termed our friends the big stags, were therefore reduced for dry-lying to the higher ridges and plateaux of the plains; and these, it chanced, lay at the greatest distance—a long two-days' ride.

The sun was low ere our horses' hoofs resounded on dry land, instead of the constant splash, splosh through flooded hollows or standing pools of rain-water. Here, too, the swelling prairie afforded rather more covert. We had now reached favourable ground, and from each rising point we examined the surrounding country with minute scrutiny, scanning each nook and corner with the binoculars. After a while we made out the head of a stag, apparently feeding

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beyond a belt of *abolágas* and jungle-grass. A direct

stalk—which otherwise seemed fairly feasible—would, under existing conditions, have necessitated *swimming* a

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considerable part of the distance, and the lateness of the hour forbade our making a long detour, which also seemed to offer a chance of success. We therefore adopted a third course, and after quickly covering some two miles, mostly through prickly spear-grass or water, reached a ridge which my companion reckoned would command the course of the deer as he fed forward. On peering through the bushes on the crest, the stag was nowhere to be seen—we had overshot the point, and he was now far to the right. Before us stretched a long tongue of marshy water, choked with grasses, and aquatic herbage floating on its surface. With a sardonic grin, M. assured me that that grass would prove the death of our stag. "He will feed along that pool," he whispered, "nibbling the water-plants and sprouting grass; but first the daylight must decline." Ten minutes later, the antlers showed, stealing from some distant covert; then the beast stepped into the open, advancing towards the water. But suspicion torments him—between each petulant snatch at the herbage, he stops and listens, raises his antlered head to gaze back towards the point whence we had first viewed him: he little thinks the enemy he fears behind is now close in his front. Presently suspicion seems allayed: he advances with stealthy strides along the grassy edge, and already approaches the limits of very long range. The express was ready cocked when the stag recommenced sniffing and gazing, now he turns and walks away: the wind is shifty, and to get it full in his nostrils he bears from us. Clearly he will not now pass our point near enough for a shot, so back to lower ground we "slither," and run forward at best speed to cut him out at another point. Still he is out of shot—300 yards off—and another race to the front is necessary, a lung-trying spin of a quarter-mile. Now, we must perforce rest, panting, for a few moments, ere we again crawl up the ascent and "speer" over the ridge. The stag is nowhere to be seen—yes, there he is! he has both heard and seen us now, and is bounding at top-speed over our very ridge, not seventy yards in advance. Ere the rifle can be levelled and a ball dispatched, the stag

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has dipped the crest: but the second barrel, after a flying run to the ridge, affords more deliberate aim at about 120 yards. "He has it," quietly remarks my companion, and as the galloping stag displays his extended flank, the blood-patch on his side is clearly marked, but *too far back*. Poor beast! though fatally struck, there is no chance to recover him to-night, for already the sun dips behind the distant *pinales*—it is too late to think of following him, and sadly we return to our horses. Ten miles to ride, and the evening spent discussing "muckle harts" and their haunts on the neighbouring wilds.

All night wind and rain: at daybreak the clouds indicated better things, but after a few fitful gleams of sunlight, the deluge set in once more. This and the next day were very bad:—wasted. It was only possible to pass the time shooting a few rabbits for the use of the *rancho*—the partridges were all paired long ago; but a lucky shot at a nervous band of sand-grouse secured four, and in some rush-clad backwaters we picked up a few snipe and two or three couples of wild-duck.

Next morning, at dawn, we set out to look for deer, the pannier-ponies following at a distance, with instructions never to come up unless shots had been fired. Facing the gale, we struck out across far-extending heaths, where the scrub, as a rule, is of convenient height for shooting over, but where, in the hollows or dells, are found deep thickets, or *manchas*. These jungle-patches cover from one or two up to thirty acres in extent: here the growth of thorny shrub and pampas-grass is much higher, thicker, and more densely entwined, affording secure "lying" for deer and other animals.

No rain had fallen since the early hours of the morning: hence the light, sodden soil exhibited the traces of every beast which had traversed it to perfection. It was some time before we found tracks large enough to betoken one of our friends, the *tunantes*. The brothers had followed two or three *rastros* for short distances, but were not satisfied with their importance. Small stags, hinds, lynx, fox and boar had wandered hither and thither, and were now doubt-

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less sleeping away the hours of daylight in some of the neighbouring thickets. Hours passed, but no *rastro gordo* (heavy track) was discovered, though every sign and impress on the light sandy soil was read as a book by the brothers, who quartered the ground to right and left like a brace of first-rate setters. M. was the first to find: suddenly he stopped and beckoned:—yes, those prints are undoubtedly of far larger hoofs than any we have yet seen: nor are they the spoor of one *tunante*, but of two. Here, says M., look where the two big beasts have stopped together to nibble the shoots of this *escobon* (genista)—there they have stripped a *romero* (rosemary) of its mauve-coloured blossoms—and here, along this hollow, they have taken their way at daybreak, direct towards some thicket-sanctuary. Now, we will not leave them, adds the wild man, till you have had a *carambola á boca de jarro!* "a right-and-left at half-range." For three or four miles, we follow the line, the men hardly deigning to look on the ground, but making, as by instinct, for points at which we invariably picked up the trail. At first it was all plain sailing; but presently we came to places where to our eyes no trace of spoor existed—to swamps where the uninitiated would detect no sign in bruised water-flower or bent sedge-shoot; we passed beneath pine-coppices where the thick-lying needles told *him* no tale of nimble feet that had pressed them hours before. At such spots a check occasionally occurred, when the brothers, muttering maledictions on old stags in general, and still more scandalous reflections on the maternal ancestry of these two in particular, opened out till one or the other caught the thread. The discovery was signalled by holding up a hand, and on we file, all three pressing quickly forward along the fatal trail. A pretty sight to watch these men cast like sleuth-hounds, when the trace was apparently lost—though lost it never was.

Now, after four miles or more, the trail gave certain indications that were interpreted to mean a desire on the part of the deer to seek shelter for the day—not a change in their course but its import was calculated by the

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hunters. As the spoor approached each small jungle, the writer went forward in advance, leaving the men to follow the *rastro*. Several thickets had been tried in this way, but each time the beasts had passed through and gone on. Now there stretched away before us a long narrow belt of covert, and approaching this the indications of the spoor showed that the two deer, as the men put it, *van de recojida*, *i.e.*, had entered the jungle wearily, and would now be couched within it. The covert was too long to risk putting the gun at the end, as the game might break on either side; so we decided to walk through it in line. Unluckily the growth was dense and high—in most places we could not see two yards in front, a tantalizing situation when one knew that each step might now bring one to the promised right-and-left! We had barely progressed 200 yards when the startled deer arose.* I heard the rush and the crash of the undergrowth, but could see nothing; my ear told me they had gone to the right, and pushing through the jungle in that direction, a slight clearing in the long grass showed a glimpse of the two heads appearing now and again above the scrub as the deer bounded away. I fired both barrels of the express, directing one at each animal. After the shots nothing could be seen; but one hart was down, a beast of twelve points. The other barrel appeared to have been a miss—the larger *tunante* of the two had escaped,

* These old and cunning stags do not always break covert so readily, as the following incident will show. We had tracked a hart for some miles, till eventually the trail led towards quite a small clump—not two acres—of 20-ft. gorse and tree-heath with an outer fringe of bamboo, all growing on dry ground, though entirely surrounded by flood-water. Every indication pointed to the stag having couched in this congenial covert; the hunters, however, traversed it without moving game. The water-weeds outside showed no sign of the stag having passed onward: but, to make sure, we took a wide cast on the drier ground beyond, separating so as completely to encircle the *mancha*. No vestige of a trail could be seen; clearly the beast still lay in the recesses of his island-sanctuary. The gun once more took up his position to leeward, and the covert was beaten again—this time more effectively, for presently, amid crash of branches and bamboos, the stag, which had been lying like a hare in its form, bounded out across the shallow marsh—with the usual result!

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Caramba! Not for long did such doubts torment us, for, on cutting off the spoor outside the covert, the tell-tale blood was seen on the cistus-twigs and on the sandy soil. We followed the wounded beast for four hours through possible and even impossible places. His pace never slackened—he seemed to be bound for Portugal. I suggested slipping a couple of dogs; but the idea was overruled. "The *tunante* is struck in the haunch," said they, "and before dogs, would run for hours: he would reach the big *pinales*, six leagues away. Our chance consists in his keeping the more open ground and smaller thickets. Before sundown we will overtake him; but *then*, you must put your bullet in a better place." These bloodhounds never doubted—on we went, patiently following the now easier trail, and before sundown we *did* overtake him. Then, as he rushed from a clump of big bulrushes in a shallow lagoon, where the fevered beast had lain down in the water, the express bullet lodged in *el mismissimo corazon*= in his very heart: and the panniers were balanced with two of the heaviest old stags that ever roamed on Andalucian plain.

The next day, a downpour of rain just at the critical moment—when game and other wild beasts are returning to their lairs—obliterated every *rastro*, and a fresh stratagem had to be employed. This was to find and rouse the stag, and then to follow the trail—necessarily a longer and more delicate operation than that last described, since the suspicions of the animal are thoroughly aroused; he is alarmed, and traverses great distances ere again he goes to cover. He is, moreover, apt to go away very wild on the second approach. The half-inundated condition of the country, however, was in our favour; and late in the afternoon, having traced a stag for many weary leagues, I had the satisfaction of pulling down a beast of "royal" rank by a very long shot.

The next day—and the last of the season—might have been one of those contributory to the Noachian deluge. Again, despite wind and weather, a *venado* of eleven points rewarded our efforts. This stag gave us much trouble:

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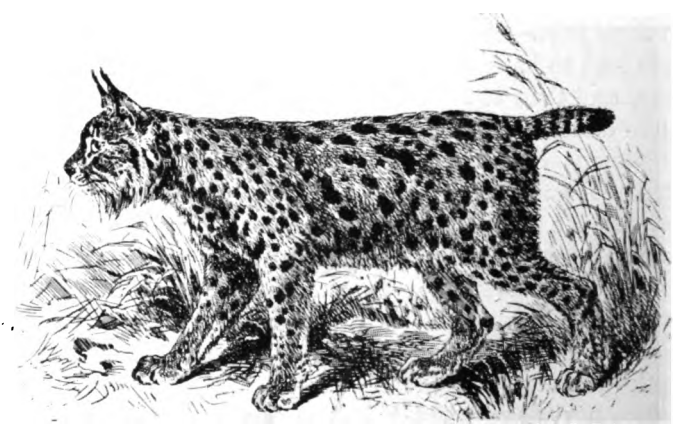
put up early in the morning, it was night ere he was secured. My first shot, a long one, struck him heavily, but he ran for hours before the dogs. We took to our horses in pursuit, but thrice he foiled us—both scent and spoor being obliterated by the rain. Twice, by wide "casts" of a mile or more in circuit, we recovered the lost thread, but the third time not a trace could we discover, and had almost given him up for lost, when he jumped up, a long way ahead, before the dogs. At top-speed we ran him to the deep waters of Martinazo, and when at last we overhauled him, he was making his last gallant fight with the two hounds, which held him at bay, breast-deep, in the moonlight.

During the long homeward ride on the morrow, we came on the big round "pugs" of a lynx, and after following them a couple of miles to his lair, he, too—a big and handsome male—was added to the bag by a single shot from the express. By nightfall we again reached the outposts of civilization, well content with the results of the campaign—four good stags and a lynx—and the wind-up of the sporting season of 1891–92.



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APPENDIX.

PART I.

THE LARGE GAME OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL,

WITH NOTES ON OTHER SPANISH MAMMALIA.

THE large game, or *caza mayor*, of Spain comprises nine or ten animals, several of which have been dealt with specifically in separate chapters. We now describe more particularly those not mentioned elsewhere, and complete a general review of other Spanish *mammalia* by a few supplementary remarks.

The beasts of chase in the Peninsula are the red, roe, and fallow deer; the Spanish ibex and chamois; wild boars, and bears of two varieties, the wolf and Spanish lynx.

RED DEER (*Cervus elaphus*).

Spanish: *Ciervo, Venado.*

Scattered locally throughout the Peninsula, the Spanish red deer present two distinct types, both differing from the Scotch animal in the absence of the neck-ruff, or mane. The forest-deer of the wooded plains, or *cotos*, carry small and rather narrow heads, measuring from 24 to 28 inches in length of horn, and some 18 to 24 in beam.

The mountain-deer, on the other hand, often exhibit a magnificent horn-development. We have seen heads from the Sierra Morena, and from the Montes de Toledo, whose massive antlers rival those of the wapiti, reaching 36 and even 40 inches and upwards in length, with a breadth of three feet.

The rutting season of the red deer commences in the Coto Doñana at the end of August (the last quarter of the August moon), and continues till the full moon in September. We

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have seen fawns following their mothers as early as January, but May is the month when they are usually dropped.

The antlers fall in April—few stags are seen with them in May. During the hornless period of spring and summer, the stags seek shelter in the densest thickets with damp lying: they also "lie out," like hares, in open country, and it is surprising how they conceal themselves—a big hart will lie completely hidden among rushes not two feet high. The flies at this season are a terrible torture to them, attacking the sprouting horns and tender surroundings.

Deer-shooting commences in November, and ends in February or early in March; and it is only necessary to add that all lands in which deer are found, both on mountain and plain, are preserved.

Measurement of Red Deer Heads.

Forest-Deer.

			Length.		Circumference.		Beam.
No. 1.	8 points	(small)	$17\frac{3}{4}$	...	$3\frac{1}{2}$	...	$16\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
„ 2.	11 „		$24\frac{1}{4}$	...	$3\frac{3}{4}$	...	$19\frac{1}{2}$ „
„ 3.	12 „	(royal)	29	...	$5\frac{1}{4}$	...	25 „
„ 4.	13 „	„	$22\frac{3}{4}$	...	$4\frac{1}{16}$	...	$22\frac{1}{2}$ „

Mountain-Deer.

		Length.		Beam.
No. 1.	12 points	$34\frac{1}{2}$ inches.	...	32 inches.
„ 2.	12 „	36 „	...	34 „
„ 3.	15 „	$37\frac{1}{2}$ „	...	$34\frac{1}{2}$ „
„ 4.*	17 „	40 „	...	$36\frac{1}{2}$ „

* No. 4. This magnificent beast, of which we annex two photos (*see* pp. 360 and 430), was shot near Marmolejos in the Sierra Morena.

Fallow Deer (*Cervus dama*).

In Spanish: *Gamo, Paleto.*

These deer are not indigenous, but were introduced by the Romans, probably from Asia Minor; and are, as at home, more

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or less private property. At the same time they exist in a perfectly wild state, and quite unenclosed, at several places—especially in the neighbourhood of Madrid, where the Royal estates of Aranjuéz, Rio-frio, El Pardo, &c., have tended to disseminate a wild race outside their boundaries.

The Spanish fallow deer are of the spotted axis-like type.

The Roebuck in Spain.

(*Cervus capreolus.*)

Though plentiful in the wooded ravines of the sierras, where it frequents sapling-thickets in preference either to scrub or forest proper, yet the roe is seldom made a special object of pursuit. The few roebuck—in Spanish, *corzo*—that have fallen to our guns have been killed when in pursuit of pig or other game.

Yet to this deer we owe as narrow an escape as can be faced; while roe-shooting in the Sierra de la Jarda, and riding along a precipitous goat-track, a projecting crag barred the way: in rounding the obstruction, it was necessary that the horses should simultaneously make an upward step or two on a sort of rock-stair. During this awkward manœuvre, one *jaca* brought his flank sharply in collision with the crag, struggled for one desperate moment to recover equilibrium, and then plunged, broadside on, down the precipice. His rider, springing from the stirrups, clutched a *retamo* bush, and thus hung suspended "between the devil and the deep." Poor *Bolero* fell crashing through the ilexes that clung to the crag—we could hear the smashing of branch after branch as he broke his way downwards. We descended to recover the gun, saddle, and equipments from the killed horse; but, to our amazement, found him quietly grazing—the gun still in the slings, the bridle over his nose—hardly, beyond a cut or two, the worse for his adventure. The fall was over 100 feet, but the stout branches of ilex and *chaparro*, with a marvellous measure of luck, had saved his life.

Roebuck, in Spain, are mostly killed with large shot (slugs), not ball; and to those who are content with this game, nearly all the southern sierras would yield a measure of sport, com-

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bined with occasional chances at pig, and this often on unpreserved grounds.

Roe are confined to the mountains—never found on the plains.

The Spanish Ibex (*Capra hispanica*).

Of the *Cabra montés* we have already treated (chapters xi. to xiii., pp. 128–172), and now add some notes which we contri-

FIVE-YEAR-OLD IBEX.

buted to the *Badminton Library* through our friend Mr. C. Phillipps-Wolley, the editor of the Big Game volumes.

The Spanish mountaineer does not much affect ibex-hunting, though there are in each mountain-village some who try to earn a few precarious dollars by it. The peasants who follow this pursuit in the alpine regions of Spain become fearless climbers: with their feet clad in *alparagatas*, or hemp-soled sandals, they traverse ridges and descend crags where nail-shod guide would falter. The first object is to get as high as possible. Then, crawling to the verge of some fearful abyss, the hunter com-

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mands the depths below, and, if he descry ibex, is enabled to approach without the warning of the wind. Should he see none, he imitates the shrill cry of the female, and not unfrequently a ram is thus betrayed by the whistle of love. The ibex-hunter must be provided with lungs of leather, a steady hand and eye, and untiring limbs.

The best time for ibex-shooting is during July and August, when camping-out on the higher regions is practicable and even enjoyable. The snow-storms and frozen state of the snow render the winter- and spring-shooting both dangerous and uncertain.

When ibex are known to be frequenting the lower valleys and chasms of the sierra, guns are concealed among the broken rocks in the higher regions commanding the ravines by which the *montéses* are accustomed to ascend. Then the beaters enter from below, shots and unearthly yells disturb the timid animals, and slowly they ascend the mountain-side, listening ever and anon as they look down from some shelving ledge or giddy point. So slowly, indeed, do they sometimes come that the hunter may contemplate them for minutes before he can despatch his bullet. At some vital spot it must take effect or the trophy is lost. Such is the vital resistance of the wild-goat that unless killed outright he will manage to gain some inaccessible precipice, and there on a hanging ledge give up his life.

Chamois (*Antilope rupicapra*).

Spanish: *Rebeco, Sario.*

The stronghold of the chamois—the *Izard* of the French hunters, *Rebeco* of Cantabria, and *Sario* in Arragon—is in the Pyrenees, and their western prolongation, the Cantabrian ranges of Santander, the Asturias, &c. They are specially abundant near the Picos de Europa. This animal is not found on any of the cordilleras of Central or Southern Spain. Mr. Packe's statement that he saw two on a misty morning in the Sierra Nevada probably arose from the similarity in size and form of the horns of the young or female ibex. Chamois inhabit only the loftiest, most wild and rocky mountain-summits, and are killed (usually with large shot) in big "*batidas*," or drives. How they manage to sustain life on these barren snow-clad heights *in winter*—

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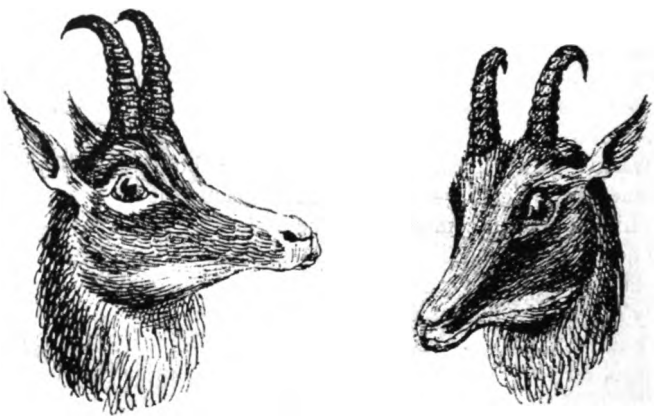
since they never descend to the lower levels—passes understanding; but the case of the ibex is no less inexplicable.

Lord Lilford writes:—In my opinion the chamois of the Pyrenees is very distinct from the chamois of Central Europe and Turkey.



NOTE.—*Wild Sheep*:—It is somewhat remarkable that the moufflon, which is found as near as Corsica and Sardinia, should be entirely unknown in the Spanish cordilleras.

BEAR (*Ursus arctos*).

Spanish: *Oso*.

There are in Spain two kinds of bear—it would, perhaps, be more correct to say two varieties—the large, dark-coloured beast, and the small brown bear, or *Hormiguero* = ant-eater. The latter, which is not uncommon in the Asturias, feeds on roots, ants'-nests, honey, and such-like humble fare; while the big black bear, distinguished as *Carnicero*, preys on goats, sheep, pigs, &c., and even pulls down horned cattle.

Bear-hunting is confined to the north—to the Pyrenees and the Cantabrian Highlands. A primitive method of pursuit survives in certain high-lying villages of the Asturias, where the mountaineers face Bruin, armed only with pike and knife. These men are associated in a sort of fraternal band, and the occupation passes from father to son. The *osero*, accompanied

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only by his dogs, seeks the bear amidst the recesses of the sierra, and engages him in single combat. His equipment consists of a broad-bladed hunting-knife and a double dagger, each of whose triangular blades fits into a central handle.

By less vigorous sportsmen, bear-hunting is carried on by calling into requisition a large number of men and dogs—usually with the assistance of the *oseros*, and by the more discreet use of fire-arms, *vice* cold steel.

The neighbourhood of Madrid was once described as "*buen monte de puerco y oso*" (good country for pig and bear), and the city itself as "*la coronada villa del oso y madroño;*" but bears no longer exist in either of the Castiles. The small *Hormiguero* is confined to the Asturias: the larger beast is also fairly common there, and not rare in Navarre, Arragon, and, possibly, Catalonia.

Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*).

Spanish: *Javato, Javali.*

The wild boar has always abounded in Spain, and its chase ever held a chief place among Spanish sports—in olden times on horseback with pike and lance. During the middle ages the pursuit of falconry took such hold upon the national taste, that the pigs were almost forgotten, and towards the close of the fifteenth century they became a positive scourge, devastating the crops and invading the outlying portions even of great cities. With the Renaissance came the application of science to sporting weapons; and, with gunpowder substituted for cold steel, the boar had a bad time of it; he was shot down as he rushed from his thicket-lair, or assassinated as he took his nocturnal rambles.

In Estremadura the favourite *chasse au sanglier* is still with horse and hound. During the stillness of a moonlight night, when the acorns are falling from the oaks in the magnificent Estremenian woods, a party of horsemen assemble to await the boars, which at night descend from the mountains to feed. Then a trained hound, termed the *maestro*, which throws tongue only to pig, is slipped: should he succeed in bringing a tusker to bay, a dozen strong dogs, half-bred mastiffs, are despatched to his assistance. Off they rush like demons, to the challenge of the *maestro*, followed by the horsemen, and there ensues a break-neck ride and a struggle with a grizzly tusker in the

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half-light, which are sufficiently exciting to make this sport a favourite with the *valientes* of Estremadura.

It is possible that, on the southern plains, pig-sticking might be attempted. The country is, however, very rough, much intercepted with cane-brakes and dense jungles of matted brushwood and briar.

In the vast cane-brakes which fringe the Guadiana are found enormous boars, whose tusks, as they charge, resemble a white collar encircling the neck.

We have noticed the young following their mothers as early as January. The piglings are at first pretty little beasts, yellowish-brown, striped longitudinally with black bars. In May we have observed the old sows and young associated into herds of twenty or more.

Wolf (*Canis lupus*).

Spanish: *Lobo.*

These Ishmaelites of the animal-world, though common enough in all the wilder regions of Iberia, rarely present themselves as a mark for the rifle-ball. Many-fold more cunning than the fox, the wolf never—not for a single instant—forgets the risk of danger nor his human enemies. When aroused in a *montería*, or mountain-drive, wolves come slowly forward, feeling their way like field-marshals in an enemy's country, and on reaching some strong crag or thicket, lie down, awaiting the arrival of the beaters, who must pass on one side, when the stealthy brute slinks back on the other.

Wolves change their residence according to the season. In summer, when the peasants' goats and sheep are pastured on the hills, they inhabit the highest sierras; in winter, when the stock is removed to lower ground, there are the wolves also.

In all parts of Spain, it is customary for herdsmen to remain in constant attendance on their flocks by day and night, to protect them from the ravages of wolves and other "beasts of the field." In parts of Southern Estremadura and in the Sierra Nevada, it is sometimes necessary to keep fires burning at night, and shots are also fired at intervals, to secure the flocks from attack. When encamped, in the neighbourhood of Almadén, some years ago, we used to hear the packs of wolves keep up a concert of unearthly howls the livelong night.

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Too cunning to fall either into trap or ambuscade, yet of late years the numbers of the Spanish wolf have been largely reduced by means of poison: they will, however, doubtless hold their own in Spain for centuries to come.

Like the bear, the wolf is also divisible into two distinct breeds, or races. There is the large grey wolf (the common kind), and the *Lobo serrano*, or mountain-wolf, which is smaller, darker, and more rufous in colour.

The following table shows the respective weights in English pounds (25 to the *arroba*), of the two types of wolf, both of which are found in all parts of Spain :—

	Males.	Females.
Lobo grande ...	125 to 150 ...	100 to 112 lbs.
Lobo serrano ...	75 „ 90 ...	60 „ 75 „

The gait of the wolf, when driven into the open, is a slow, slouching gallop; but he goes much faster than he appears to do. Well might the Lusitanian farmer tell Latouche, with an imitative gesture: "Corre, corre, corre; mas o diablo mesmo não o apanhava"—"Slowly he bounds, bounds along; but the devil himself could not overtake him!"

Fox (*Canis vulpes—var., melanogaster*).

Spanish: *Zorro.*

The Spanish foxes are all of the black-bellied species, or variety; but the majority lack the jet black underparts that distinguish Indian examples—being rather clouded, or marbled, than pure black. We have, however, shot one (in November) which was far more typically coloured—quite black below and on legs—than the average, which are generally greyer and more silvery than our British fox. A few show a white crescent on the breast. They run about 15 lbs. in weight, and 48 inches in length.

Foxes are not hunted in Spain except by the Calpe Hounds at Gibraltar.

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Spanish Lynx (*Felis pardina*).

Spanish: *Gato cierval, Lince.*

This species is also peculiar to the Peninsula, and in the southern provinces may be called common, frequenting the wilder, scrub-covered wastes and wooded sierras, where it preys on hares, rabbits, and partridge. In the spring the large and powerful males are also destructive among the young red deer.

The spotted lynx is the only species found in Spain, its range extending (though in decreasing abundance) to the Asturian ranges, and even, we believe, to the Pyrenees, where we have failed to find any evidence of the existence of the northern form (*Felis lynx*).

The movements of lynx are most dignified, having rather the demeanour of the tiger than of the wild-cat: it advances with slow, stately stride and measured movements, standing at the full height of the long, powerful legs, and the head carried level with the back.

Though its approach, *per se*, is absolutely noiseless, yet on a still day it is just possible for an ear attuned to distinguish anything differing from the ordinary sounds of the wilds, to detect a slight *crackling*—a rustle, as the dry cistus-twigs re-unite after being divided by the passage of the lynx's body.

Its stealth preserves the lynx from falling readily into danger, and few are shot comparatively with their numbers in the wilder regions of Spain. When a lynx detects an ambuscade, there is an instant's cogitation ere the big cat bounds off. One moment, from the jungle, the great yellow eye meets one's own —that cruel, pretty face, full of hate and shy self-possession, set off by the bushy whiskers and tufted ears—then, like a yellow gleam, the beast disappears for ever in the thicket.

On one occasion, in winter, while redleg-shooting, we noticed a commotion among some kites hovering at a certain spot. On going there, the writer came suddenly on a lynx which had killed a rabbit—a morsel doubtless coveted by the *milanos*. This lynx, though a rather small female, on being wounded with small shot, made a gallant effort to attack its aggressor.

The country folk declare that there is no better meat than that of lynx; but then, it is true, they hold that otter is very good for the health, *muy saludable;* that bittern is *carne muy fina*, while the flesh of owls and hawks of all kinds possess

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medicinal properties, and with such remedies, various herbs and roots, bleeding, and other simple specifics, the rural Spaniard relies—perhaps with reason—on giving the *medico* a wide berth. We have tried lynx, however, approaching the feast with perfectly open mind, and found it fairly good. The flesh was short in grain, white, and devoid of any unpleasant flavour. Without prejudice, a *guiso* of lynx is as good as one of partridge or veal.

Lynxes produce their young in April, often using the hollowed trunk of some cavernous cork-tree, or forming a sort of nest on the big branches for the purpose. We have reared the young lynxes from babyhood, and found them at least more docile than the fanatically furious wild-cats: but that is not saying much: for both are impregnated to the marrow with hate and treachery, and eventually these attempts to "civilize" the wild *felidæ* resulted in a tragic finale. For nearly a year we had kept a young female lynx (chained) in the garden: though often vicious and never reliable, she showed some slight "feline amenities"—purring and rubbing herself against one's leg, when petted, like a domestic tabby. But at length she perpetrated a terrible assault on a poor woman who chanced to pass near her kennel. The brute probably mistook her victim for the woman who daily brought it its food; and, seeing her pass by, with a sudden tremendous bound she broke her chain, and sprang upon the poor *lavandera's* shoulders, tearing open her face with one claw, her breast with the other. Assistance was luckily at hand, and the savage brute, after a long chase, was killed. The poor woman was desperately hurt: for days her life was in danger, and for many weeks she was obliged to remain in bed under the doctor's care.

The male lynxes are much larger and handsomer than the females, weighing some 42 to 50 lbs. The ground-colour of both is warm tawny-brown, but on the males the spots are fewer, larger, and more defined.

Wild-Cat (*Felis catus*).

Spanish: *Gato montés, Gato castellano,* or *romano.*

As above remarked, the young wild-cats are quite the most ferocious and utterly untameable beasts of which we have had any experience; the mixture of fear and fury they exhibit in captivity is indescribable, even when only a few weeks old.

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Wild-cats are common throughout Spain wherever rabbits abound. In the sierras, they breed in crags and rabbit-burrows; on the plains the young are often produced in nests built in trees, or among the tall bamboos in the cane-brakes.

Weight of an old tom 10¼ lbs., of a female 8½ lbs. In some examples the fur of the underparts is of a warm tawny hue. The general colour of the wild-cat is a brindled grey, with black stripes.

Genet (*Viverra genetta*).

Spanish: *Gineta.*

A beautiful beast, with clear grey fur, blotched with big black spots, a long tail, and a head more like a fox-terrier than a cat: common in all the southern provinces, and as far north as Old Castile; at La Granja, and in the provinces of Avila and Segovia. Not found (we believe) in Asturias or Santander.

The genet lives in holes in rocks and crags, and in large woods. In winter, we have shot them when beating the sallows and cane-brakes for woodcock. It feeds on small rodents and young birds, occasionally, like the polecat, plundering hen-roosts, when it eats the brains of its numerous victims, and leaves the body untouched. In autumn, when the grapes are ripe, it is said to be very fond of a feast in the vineyards; but its principal food consists of mice and moles. It is considered a better *cazador* than even the lynx, wily as a fox, and twisting as a snake.

Our friend Manuel de la Torre killed three genets in Estremadura that were *entirely black*, and rather smaller than the average. One of these specimens is in the Madrid Museum.

Marten (*Mustela foina*).

Spanish: *Foina, Garduño.*

Common in Andalucia, Estremadura, and Valencia: also observed in the Asturias and Santander. Only one kind of marten is found generally throughout Spain, but we have some reason to believe that the "*marta*" of the Pyrenees is the rarer pine-marten (*M. abietum*).

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POLECAT (*Mustela putorius*)—"*Turón.*"

OTTER (*Lutra vulgaris*)—"*Nutra,*" or "*Nutria.*"

BADGER (*Meles taxus*)—"*Tejón.*"

All these are common in Andalucia, and generally throughout Spain. Though so strictly nocturnal in its habits, we have occasionally found the badger above-ground by day, in our *batidas* in the Coto Doñana, &c., and have dug out a brood of young as early as January 29th.

WEASEL (*Mustela vulgaris*).

Spanish: *Comadreja, Rojizo.*

Not observed in Andalucia, but common in Provincia de Madrid, Old Castile; in the Sierra de Guadarrama, and in Estremadura and Arragon.

MONGOOSE (*Herpestes widdringtoni.*)

Spanish: *Melón.*

Common in the southern provinces, and as far north as the Sierra de Gredos (Old Castile). Ichneumons feed largely on snakes and other reptiles. They seldom offer a shot in the open, clinging tenaciously to the thickest covert, and are more often taken alive—either dug out of their burrows or caught by the dogs—than shot.

Among minor quadrupeds may be mentioned the hedgehog (*Erizo*), the mole (*Topo*), the shrew (*Musaraña*), squirrel (*Ardilla*), water-rat (*Rata de agua*), with the usual family-group of rats and mice. One particularly interesting species, the trumpeter water-shrew (*Mygale pyrenaica*), is found in the rivers of Guipúzcoa, Navarre, and, *fide* our friend Manuel de la Torre, in the Rio de Piedra, Provincia de Zaragoza.

The dormouse (*Liron*), and fat dormouse (*Liron campestre*), are both common in Andalucia.

The Spanish hare (*Lepus mediterraneus*), and rabbit require no further remark.

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PART II.

SPRING-MIGRANTS TO SPAIN.

WITH DATES OF ARRIVAL, ETC., IN ANDALUCIA.

IN the following list we endeavour to indicate the closest possible point of time for the arrival, nesting, and departure of spring-migrants to Spain, the dates especially referring to Andalucia. But since the passage of almost each species, though in many cases punctual to a day or two in commencing, continues during three or four weeks—and in some instances over much longer periods—it is only possible to approximate. Thus there is a distinct arrival of Swallows in February (early in March many already have eggs), yet the "through-transit" of vast bodies—destined perhaps to populate Lapland and Siberia—is conspicuous throughout April, and even into May.

In compiling these lists the recorded observations of other naturalists have been freely utilized, especially the papers of Lord Lilford and Mr. Howard Saunders in the *Ibis*, and Col. Irby's "Ornithology of the Straits of Gibraltar." In ornithological matters the writer has a weakness for *dates*,* and the last-mentioned work fairly bristles with these valuable facts. For five springs its author maintained a careful watch on the Straits, and during those years hardly a movement of feathered fowl betwixt the Pillars of Hercules could escape his vigilance.

* Where exact dates are mentioned in the following table they refer to the earliest or the latest occurrences, respectively, that have come under our notice.

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LIST OF SPRING-MIGRANTS.

	Arrives.	Nests.	Departs.	Remarks.
Egyptian Vulture.....	End Feb.–Mar.	April 1–10	Sept.	...
Montagu's Harrier.....	End Mar.	May 1–10	Sept.	...
Booted Eagle..	Mar. 25	April 10	Sept. }	A few winter
Serpent Eagle.	Mar. 8	April 15	Oct. }	near Malaga.
Black Kite.....	Mar. 10	April 30	Sept.–Oct.	...
Honey Buzzard	End April–May	None breed	Sept. 17, '92	In transit only.
Hobby	April	...	Sept.	do.
Lesser Kestrel.	End Feb.–Mar.	April 25	Sept.–Oct.	Some winter.
Scop's Owl ...	Mid-Mar.	May 10	Sept.–Oct.	do.
R. N. Nightjar	May 1	May 25	Sept.–Oct.	...
Swift	Mar.–April	May	Sept.–Oct.	...
Pallid Swift ...	End Mar.–April	do.	...	...
Alpine Swift ...	Mar. 25–Apl.	do.	Aug.–Sept.	....
Roller.....	End Mar.–April	April 15	Sept.	...
Bee-Eater	End Mar.–April	May 15	July–Aug.	...
Hoopoe.....	End Feb.–April	May 1	Aug.–Oct.	...
Cuckoo	Mar. 25–April	April 23	July–Aug.	...
SpottedCuckoo	Feb. 28–Mar.	April 15	July–Aug.	..
Wryneck	March	...	Sept.	Breeds in Castile.
Ring-Ouzel* ...	Mar.–April	Few breed*	Autumn	Transit.*
Rock-Thrush...	End Mar.–Apl.—early	May(Arragon) ...	26 Sept., '68 (Irby)	...
Wheatear	Mar. 1–April	None breed	Oct.–Nov.	In transit.
Eared Wheatear	Mar. 30–April	May 10, '71	Autumn	...
Russet Wheatear	Mar. 30–April	May 12, '71	do.	...
Whinchat	April 10, '83	None breed	Sept.	Transit only.
Nightingale ...	April 8–15	May 7, '83	Aug.–Sept.	...
Redstart*	Mar. 25–April	None breed	Sept.–Oct.	Transit.
GardenWarbler	Mid-April	May 10	Oct.	...
Orphean Warbler.....	Mid-April	May 15	Sept.	...
Whitethroat ...	April 10–20	May 12	Sept.–Oct.	...
Spectacled Warbler.....	Mar. 10 (Irby)	...	...	...

* Some Ring-Ouzels nest in Sierra Nevada—eggs received from Colmenar by H. S.—possibly also some Redstarts.

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	Arrives.	Nests.	Departs.	Remarks.
Sub-alpine Warbler.....	March (end)	May (early)	Oct.	...
Bonelli's Warbler.....	April-early	...	Sept.	...
Wood-Wren ...	April 25	May 25	Oct.	Scarce.
Willow-Wren..	March	April 10	...	Many resident.
Chiffchaff	...	April 20	...	do.
Yellow Willow-Wren	April (end)	May 20	Aug.-Sept.	..
W. Pallid do...	May 1	June 10	Aug.-Sept.	...
Rufous Warbler.....	May 1	May 28	Sept.	...
Savi's Warbler.	March (?)	May 4	Aug. (Irby)	Rare and local.
Great Sedge Warbler.....	April	May 28	...	...
Reed-Warbler..	End March	May 5	...	...
PiedFlycatcher*	April 8-30	None breed*	Oct. 1-17	...
Spotted do. ...	May 10	May 25	Aug.-Sept.	In transit.
Swallow.....	Mid-Feb. to May	Mar.-April	Sept.-Oct.	A few in winter
Martin	February	...	Sept.-Oct.	...
Sand-Martin ...	Feb.-Mar.	May (H. S.)	Oct.	A few all winter.
Crag-Martin ...	Feb.-Mar.	April-May	Oct.-Nov.	Many in winter.
Woodchat	Mar.-April	May 10	Sept.-Oct.	...
G. H. Wagtail.	Feb.-Mar.	April 25	Aug.-Sept.	...
Tree Pipit	Mar.-April	None breed	Oct.-Nov.	In transit.
Tawny Pipit ...	April	...	Aug.	Some breed, H S.
Short-toed Lark	Mid-March	April 20	Aug.-Sept.	...
*C. Bætica**.....	?	May 9	?	(Unknown).
Cirl-Bunting ...	Mar.	April 12	Oct.-Nov.	Many resident.
Ortolan	April	May 5	Sept.	...
Serin	February	May 10	Oct.-Nov.	...
Golden Oriole..	April 15-20	May 20	Aug.-Sept.	...
Spotless Starling.....	March	April 23	Sept.	...
Turtle-Dove ...	April-end May	May	Sept. (end) Oct.	...
Quail	Mar.-April	May	Sept. 15-30	...
Landrail.....	Feb.-Mar.	None breed	Oct.	Many winter.
PurpleGallinule	February	April 25	Oct.	Many resident.
Stone-Curlew..	Mar.-April	April 20	Oct.-Nov.	Many resident.
Pratincole	April 8-20	May 12	Sept.	...
Grey Plover ...	May	None breed	Nov.	On passage only.
Kentish Plover.	March	April 15	...	Many winter.
Lesser Ring Plover	Mid-March	May 10	...	...
Common Sandpiper†.....	April 15	None breed†	Aug.-Sept.	...

* Pied Flycatcher believed to breed in Castile (H. S.). *C. Bætica* is perhaps resident.

† The Sandpiper breeds in Castile and in Portugal, and a few pairs may possibly do so in Andalucia. The main transit occurs about April 15, coinciding with their arrival on the North British moorlands.

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	Arrives.	Nests.	Departs.	Remarks.
Curlew Sandpiper*	May	None breed	...	Transit.
Knot	May 1–10	do.	...	do.
Wood-Sandpiper	April-May	do.	...	do.
Greenshank ...	April–May	do.	Sept.–Oct.	A few winter.
Black-tailed Godwit	Feb.–Mar.	do.	...	...
Bar-tailed do.	May	do.	Sept.	...
Ruff	April–May	do.	Aug.–Sept.	Many winter.
Great Snipe ...	April–May	do.	Sept.- Oct.	...
Whimbrel	May	do.	Sept.–Oct.	...
Slender-billed Curlew	Spring	do.	Autumn	A few winter.
Purple Heron..	March 20	April 10	Sept.	...
Little Egret ...	April–early	June 8	Oct.–Nov.	...
Buff-backed Heron.....	Mar.–April	do.	...	...
Squacco do. ...	April 20	do.	...	...
Little Bittern..	April–end	do.	Sept.	...
Night Heron...	April–end	May 20	...	...
Glossy Ibis ..	April 20	May 28	...	...
Spoonbill	April 10	May (early) (Irby)	..	Observed in winter.
Crane.....	Feb.–Mar.	April 25	Oct.	Many winter.
Demoiselle Crane.....	Mar.–April	...	Aug.	...
Stork	Jan.–Feb.	March (end)	Sept.	Many winter.
Black Stork ...	Feb. to May	May	Nov.	...
Marbled Duck.	April	May (end)	Sept.	...
Garganey	Feb.–Mar.	do.	Sept.	Very irregular.
NyrocaPochard	Feb.–Mar.	May 20	Oct.–Nov.	...
White-faced Duck	Mar.–April.	May 20	Oct.–Nov.	...
Gull-billed Tern	April 8	May 25	...	...
Lesser Tern ...	April 13	May 25	Oct. 25 (Irby)	...
Whiskered Tern	April 10	May 20	Aug. (Favier)	...
Black Tern ...	May 1	May 30	Sept.–Oct. (Favier)	...

* Many other congeneric species of the Plover and Sandpiper class, such as Sanderling, Little and Temminck's Stints, Purple Sandpiper, &c., might also be included, passing north through Andalucia in millions at the same period; but many individuals also spend the autumn and winter there.

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PART III.

SPRING-NOTES IN NAVARRE.

BY ALFRED CRAWHALL CHAPMAN.

The breeding-season in Navarre, owing probably to the high mean altitude of that province, appears to be relatively later than in other districts of similar latitude. In mid-April (1891) at St. Jean de Luz and Irun, we luxuriated in warm sunshine and the shade of leafy trees; but at Alsasua, on the afternoon of the 15th, we found ourselves transported to a region as cold and bleak as Northumbria, while at Pamplona, though the sun shone gratefully, his warmth was marred by a biting wind.

A parched-looking, sterile country separates the capital of Navarre from Burguete, a small village on the Spanish slope of the Pyrenees just under the Roncesvalles Pass, whither we were bound. Outside Pamplona, a single polyglot, or icterine warbler was observed, together with the following other species:—redstarts, tree-pipits, woodchats, ortolans, goldfinch, linnets, yellow-hammers, and chaffinches; and on the road to Burguete were added:—griffon vultures—doubtless from Yrurzun—Bonelli's eagle, red kites, one marsh-harrier, hoopoes, black redstarts, white wagtails, bluethroat (white-spotted form), robin, willow-wren, swallow, ring-ouzel, stonechat, wheatear, calandra lark, buzzard, kestrel, and grey partridge.

At Burguete, between April 17th and 21st, of raptores observed, with the exception of occasional kites, the buzzard was the commonest hawk, and already had eggs. Tawny owls had feathered young, but, beyond house-martins breeding in the crags, no other species appeared to have commenced to nest. In the beech woods around Burguete six species of tits were common, viz., the oxeye, blue, cole, marsh, long-tailed and

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crested. The last-named has a pretty rippling note, quite unique in its way. Nuthatches were numerous and clamorous, and green woodpeckers (? sp.) were noted. Amongst the box-scrub, fire-crests were common, with dippers and sandpipers on the streams; while, scattered about in the woods and hills, we came across wryneck, wren, white and yellow wagtails, pied and spotted flycatchers, turtle- and stock-doves, serin, gold- and bull-finches and carrion-crow. Above the Roncesvalles convent on April 20th, in a grey mist and drizzling rain, numbers of golden orioles, tree-pipits, skylarks, swallows, stock-doves and other common birds were picking their way northwards on migration; and a single spectacled warbler was obtained. This species has very active, sprightly movements, and a robin-like gait when hopping on the ground.

On April 21st we journeyed, *viâ* Orbaiceta, to a forest-guard's house in the great Iraty forest, observing *en route* grey wagtails and choughs, Egyptian vultures and ravens, the latter nesting. The change from the beech woods of Burguete to the endless spruce-fir forests of Iraty proved disappointing. Doubtless *Picus martius* breeds here, for we saw woodpeckers' holes which, from their size, could belong to no other species; but not a sight either of this bird or of the nutcracker rewarded our careful search. Bonelli's warbler, with its rather shrill, monosyllabic note, abounded wherever the nature of the ground suited its habits, but had not yet paired; nor could we ascertain that any other species were yet breeding. The hedge-sparrow here was of a noticeably paler cast of plumage than at home—perhaps explained by the altitude; while at Burguete, the chaffinches were visibly brighter in colour, and we also detected a striking difference in the song of yellow-hammer and some other species, as compared with English birds—possibly the mysterious beginnings of evolution. On the way back to Burguete, a sedge-warbler and a lovely specimen of the wall-creeper—the only one we saw—were obtained.

During our six days' absence, a considerable influx of migrants had occurred at Burguete, as evidenced by increased numbers of pied flycatchers (mostly males), woodchats and black redstarts. Blue-headed wagtails (*M. neglecta*) were running on the grass about the horses' feet, and, though the bird has been given specific rank, reminded me strongly of *M. cinereocapilla*, which I knew well in Lapland in 1884. During

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a two hours' ramble before breakfast on April 25th, just before leaving for home, the following were observed :—sparrow-hawk, a pair of snipe, magpies and jays, one heron, a pale blue harrier and a golden eagle.

Our short experience in Navarre is conspicuous more for what we did *not* see than for what we did. Extensive forests, thickly-grown, without underwood, and in a mountainous region, are not favourable to bird-life. Such places lack rabbits for the raptores, and are deficient in insect-food for the warblers and other small species, while the absence of marshy ground explains that of aquatic birds. April is, however,—at any rate in such seasons as that of 1891—quite a month too early for ornithological research in Navarre.

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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON BIRDS.

(SOUTHERN SPAIN.)

THE following remarks relate to certain species which have come under our observation in Spain, but which have not been included in the text:—

Black-winged Kite (*Elanus cæruleus*, Desfont).—Rare: a pair observed near San Lucar in April. The male fell to a long shot, but rose again and escaped.

Sparrow-hawk (*Gavilan*).—Most numerous in winter, but some remain to breed.

Merlin (*Esmerejon*).—In winter only.

Lesser Kestrel (*Primilla*).—One of the commonest birds in spring and summer, nesting in swarms in the towns, on churches, &c., and on the ruined Moorish watch-towers.

Osprey (*Aguila pescadora*).—Frequently observed on Guadalquivir and other large rivers: breeds.

White Owl (*Lechuza*).—Abundant and resident.

Brown Owl.—Scarce in south: one shot in December.

Long-eared Owl (*Bujo*).—Rare in Andalucia: the young have been obtained near Granada. More plentiful in Castile and Biscay.

Short-eared Owl (*Carabo*).—In winter: often very numerous. While partridge-shooting on the plains, we have noticed five or six on wing at once. *Asio capensis* we have not met with.

Kingfisher (*Martin pescador*).—Most numerous in winter: especially so in Portugal.

Wryneck (*Torce-cuello*).—In wooded sierras—March.

Mistle-Thrush (*Charla*).—Chiefly in winter, but breeds in higher sierras; have seen eggs taken near Tangier.

Dipper (*Pechi-blanco, Tordo de agua*).—Resident on mountain-streams, but relatively scarce in the south.

Hedge-Sparrow.—In garden at Jerez in January.

Wren (*Ratilla*).—Common and resident; nests in sierras in March.

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Fire-crest.—In pine-woods; resident.

Tree-Creeper (*Trepatroncos*).—Resident; nests in the wooded sierras in April. It is also known as *Arañero, i.e.*, "spider-catcher," a name it shares with the Wall-Creeper, which species we have not observed.

Nuthatch.—Common in Castile and the north, but not observed in Andalucia except in Sierra Nevada. This species is also known as *trepatroncos*.

Crested Tit (*Capuchino*).—Observed in the mountain forests of Castile. Resident and common near Gibraltar.

Sand-Martin.—Breeds on Guadalquivir—April.

Woodlark.—In winter only; leaves in April. Not common. Our familiar Skylarks and Titlarks swarm in winter in Spain, but leave the south in March. The Calandra, Crested, and Short-toed Larks, with the Corn-Bunting, are among the most abundant of Spanish birds at all seasons.

Rock-Bunting (*Emberiza cia*, Linn.).—Common in sierras, where it nests in April near clearings and cultivated patches.

White Wagtail.—Arrives in swarms in September, remaining till March. The pied wagtail we have not identified.

Grey Wagtail.—Common in winter, and some nest on the mountain streams, even in Andalucia.

Serin.—This, with the goldfinch and three following species, the stonechats, bee-eaters, rufous, and black-headed warblers and nightingales, is among the commonest and most characteristic birds of Southern Spain.

Linnet (*Camacho*).

Greenfinch (*Verdon*).

Chaffinch (*Pinzon*).—All common; most so in winter.

Rock-Sparrow (*Gorrion montés*).—Common in the sierras, where it breeds in holes in May.

Lesser Redpole.—Rare and irregular; in severe winters only. Many in garden at Jerez in January, 1888.

Siskin (*Lugano*). — Irregular; in winter only. Several obtained in garden, March 15, 1891.

Rook.—Occasional flocks in winter.

Carrion Crow.—Rare; found a nest with five eggs, Sierra de las Cabras, March 23rd. B. is sure he has seen *C. cornix* when shooting in winter.*

* *Corrigendum*:—Though we have stated (p. 243) that the Raven breeds *late* in Spain, it also does so early, for Mr. Saunders writes us:—"At Málaga it was nesting by mid-February, and near Baza I watched a pair feeding their young between 15th and 20th March."

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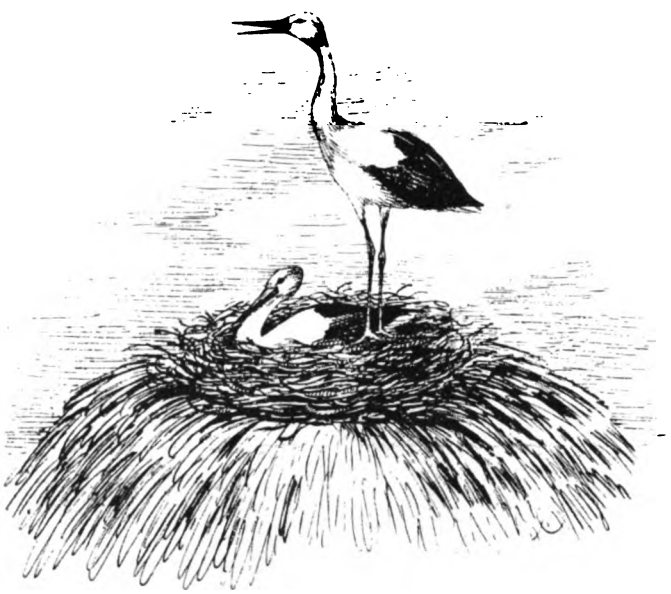
Sandwich Tern.—Obtained on Guadalete in March and April on passage.

Gannets and Skuas.—Observed in Straits and Bay of Trafalgar in winter and early spring.

Red-throated Diver.—Several shot in winter.

Shearwaters.—In Straits: observed in hundreds off Málaga in March.

Stormy Petrels.—Common on the coast, and probably breeds on some of the rocky islands.



STORK'S NEST ON STRAW-STACK.

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GLOSSARY.

Á boca de jarro—At short range.
Abolága—Spanish gorse.
Aficionado—An amateur, enthusiast.
Alcornoque—Cork-oak.
Alforjas—Holsters, saddle-bags.
Almuerzo—Breakfast, tiffin.
Alparagatas—Hempen-soled sandals.
Anafe—A charcoal cooking-stove.
Arenál—Sand-waste, desert.
Armajo—Samphire.
Arramago—Charlock.
Arroyo—Stream, watercourse.

Bandada—A flock, or pack.
Bandolerismo—Brigandage.
Barbon, barbudo—Bearded.
Barranco—A low cliff.
Barrio—Quarter of a town, suburb.
Batida—A beat, or drive for game.
Bebidero—A drinking-place.
Boracha—A wine-skin.
Borrico—A donkey.
Busné—A gentile—*i.e.*, not a gypsy.

Cabestro, or *cabresto*—Decoy, stalking horse.
Cama—Bed, lair of wild beast.
Camino—Road.
Campo, campiña—Country, cultivated land.
Cancho—Crag, precipice.
Cántaro—Water-jar.
Carabinero—Carbineer, exciseman.
Carbonero—Charcoal-burner.
Casuela—Stewing-pan, also the stew.
Catre—Tressle-bed, camp-bed.
Cazador—Shooter, sportsman.
Caza mayor—menor—Large, and small game.

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Cédula de vecindad—Certificate of identity.
Cencerro—Cattle-bell.
Cerrones—Panniers, mule-packs.
Chambonada—Bungle.
Chaparro—An evergreen oak.
Choza—Peasant's cot or hut.
Cicada—Cricket.
Cochino—Pig.
Contrabandista—Smuggler.
Corral—enclosure; belt of forest or jungle.
Coto—Game-preserve.
Cuadrilla—Troop, gang.

Dehesa—Grazing ground, sheep-walk.
Despoblado—Desert, waste.
Dicho—Declaration, troth.
Dormidero—Sleeping-place.

Echando la rueda—"Making a wheel"—*i.e.*, describing a circle.
Encierro—Driving in bulls to the ring.
Entrada—Entry, immigration.
Era—Threshing-ground.
Errate—"Black blood" (gypsy).
Escopeta—Musket, gun.
Espada—Sword; a matador.

Falucha—Felucca-rigged boat.
Faja—Waistband.
Fango—Mud.
Funda—Saddle-sling for gun.

Garganta—Mountain-gully.
Garrocha—Long wooden lance.
Gazpacho—A dish of bread, vegetables, oil, vinegar, &c., a salad.
Guiso—Stew.

Huerta—Orchard, garden.

Jaca—Riding horse, pony.
Junco, juncale—Reed, reed-bed.

Ladron en grande—Robber on a large scale.
Lancha—Small boat, punt.
Lidia, lidiador—Fight, fighter (of bulls).

Macho—Male.
Majo—Dandy, gallant.

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Malagueña—Couplet, topical song.
Mancha—Thicket, jungle.
Manchon—Fallow.
Mano negra—"Black Hand," a secret society.
Manta—Cloak, saddle-rug.
Marisma—Marsh land.
Montería—Mountain-shooting campaign.
Mosca—Fly.

Nata—Cream.
Navaja—Clasp-knife.
Novio-a—Sweetheart.

Ojéo—Drive (for game).
Olivár—Olive-grove.
Olla—Earthen cooking-pot, stew.

Pajaráco—Large bird, vulture.
Pajarêra—Breeding-place of birds.
Parador—Inn, resting-place.
Patero—Duck-shooter.
Patio—Courtyard of house.
Pinal—Pine forest.
Piorno—A species of broom.
Podenco—Hunting-dog (of lurcher type).
Poniente—West wind.
Posada—Village inn, lodging-house.
Puchero—Earthen pan for cooking.
Pueblo—cito—Village, hamlet.
Puesto—Post, ambush.

Querencia—Haunt.

Rastro—Trail, spoor.
Reclamo—Decoy, call-bird.
Retamo—A species of broom.
Rincon—Corner.
Rodéo—"Rounding-up" of cattle.

Sartén—Frying-pan.
Sequestrador—Bandit who holds to ransom.
Serrano—Mountaineer.
Suerté—(1) Luck; (2) the modes of attack or "passes" in the bull-fight.

Tentadero—Trial (of young bulls).
Tirador—Gunner.

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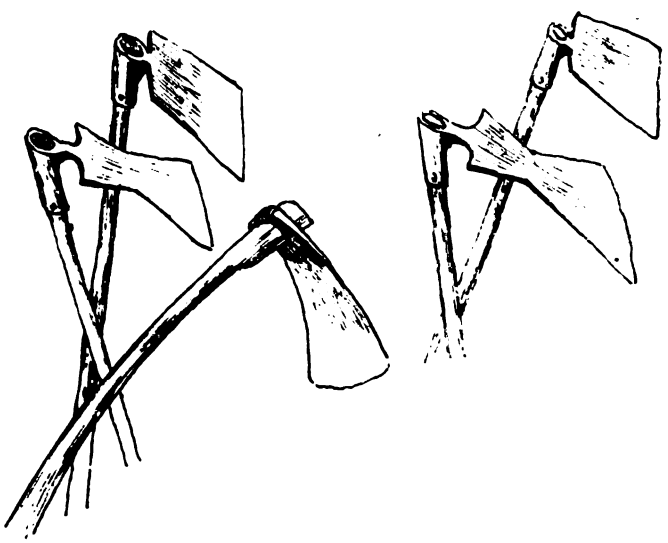
Toréo—Art of bull-fighting.
Toril—Lair of bull, adjoining bull-ring.
Toro bravo—Fighting bull.
Tunante—Cunning rogue.

Vega—Open plain.
Venta—Wine-shop.
Vereda—Bridle-path.

Zincali—Gypsy.



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